

UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE
SECOND ROUND, SECOND LEG

FC BARCELONA
V
GLASGOW CELTIC

48 PAGE
SOUVENIR
PROGRAMME



HENRIK
LARSSON
SPECIAL
FEATURE



CAMP NOU, BARCELONA
TUESDAY, MARCH 4 2008
KICK OFF 20.45



HAIL! HAIL!

A WARM WELCOME FROM LUIS TO

Bar Petit & Restaurant Macareno

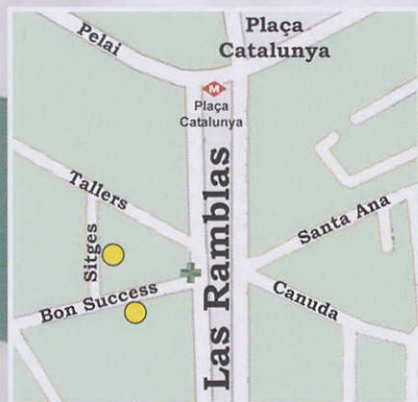
Celtic Fans Welcome!

Great Location!

No Ramblas Rip-off Prices!

Traditional Scottish Breakfast
Sausage, Bacon, Egg, Potato scone,
Black Pudding, Tea & Toast 7 Euro

Tapas, Magners, Heineken...
Come along and enjoy the Party!



Bar Petit

Calle Bon Success, 10

(2nd on the right down the Ramblas,
where there's a chemist on the corner)

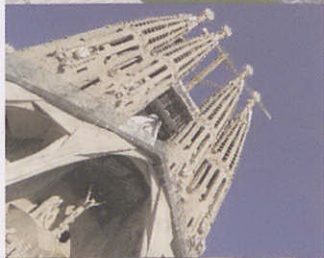
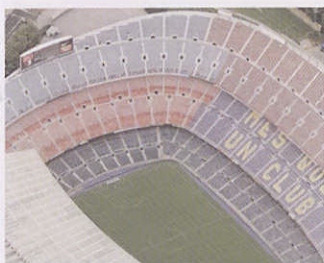
Restaurant Macareno

Calle Sitges, 10

Tel: 933025590

WELCOME TO BARCELONA!

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FOREWORD

Welcome to this special commemorative programme put together especially for the visit of Celtic FC to Barcelona. To get things started, here are a few words from one of the city's most renowned Celtic supporting residents...

It's such a pleasure to have my fellow Celtic fans here in my adopted city to see the only Scottish side remaining in this years Champions League.. Three years ago I swapped the cosmopolitan delights of Heraghty's Bar on the southside of Glasgow for the somewhat different attractions to be found here in Catalunya.

Obviously the biggest thing I miss is the bi-weekly pilgrimage to Celtic Park, but for any Hoops fan if there is one city in the world where the local team provides the opportunity to support a team, get to know its history and where the support shares the same values as your team back home, it's here in Barcelona. A city where a football club became the focus for an entire race of people, who had struggles and prejudice to overcome. As a consequence the team developed not only a winning ethos but an ethos that demanded the victory by playing the game in the right manner. Sound.

In recent years the bond between the two clubs was enhanced by a certain Celtic legend single handedly winning the Champions League for Barcelona. (okay maybe stretching it a little but you get my drift) and I am certain this game will only cement that relationship further.

Just a word of warning though, Barcelona is a fantastic city, and one that offers just about everything you want on an away trip with the Bhoys , but the last visit by a Scottish club, which passed without major incidents did upset some of the locals. All I would ask is that you show the respect for the city and its residents that rightly earned the support recognition from both UEFA and FIFA.

It is fantastic to have the best supporters in the world here, so enjoy the city, enjoy its wonderful people and hopefully enjoy a memorable performance by the Bhoys

KEEP THE FAITH

Jim Burke

FC BARCELONA V CELTIC FC SOUVENIR PROGRAMME

Available from the following bars

Michael Collins Irish Bar

Plaça Sagrada Família, 4

Flaherty's Irish Pub

Plaza Joaquim Xirau

Restaurant Macareno

Carrer Bon Success, 10

Bar Petit

Carrer Sitges, 10

The Fastnet Irish Pub

Joan de Borbo 22

The Celtic Cross

Corsega, 343

Re:Public House

Passeig Sant Joan 74

Fish and Chips

Rambla del Raval 26

For all correspondence:

barcelticprog@yahoo.com

THE CELTIC CROSS



BARCELONA
CELTIC
SUPPORTERS CLUB



C/Corsega, 343

Food all day!

12am-3am

Tel: 93 368 17 19

www.celticcross.es



BARÇA IN COMMAND

Barcelona already have one foot in the quarter finals after beating Celtic in the first leg despite trailing 2-1 at half time



1-0! Vennegoor of Hesselink heads Celtic into the lead



1-1! But two minutes later Leo Messi levels affairs

"Barça almost already have both feet in the quarter finals of the Champions League", or so Catalan sports daily *El Mundo Deportivo* claimed after Barça became the first team since, well themselves, to achieve the mighty difficult task of being the Celts at Paradise.

Barcelona bring a 3-2 lead back to the Camp Nou for the second leg, meaning Celtic not only have to win, but will need to score at least two goals in the process.

It was all the more frustrating for the home side because at half time the prospects were very bright indeed. Barça may have dominated most of the midfield play, but Celtic

had made their chances count and went in at the break with a 2-1 lead and looking confident of having a result to defend on March 4th.

Barça were able to field virtually a full strength team, with Ronaldinho making his first start of 2008, and finding himself being marked by the 19-year-old right back Paul Caddis, standing in for the cup tied Andreas Hinkel. And considering his lack of experience, Caddis' was performance was one of the few positives Celtic could take out of their first leg display.

Right from the start Barça made it clear that they hadn't flown all the way to Scotland just to come back

with a 0-0 draw to defend. Iniesta and Henry had already come close before Celtic launched their first serious offensive.

Flying Dutchman

Aiden McGeady started the move down the left, then Scott McDonald held the ball up nicely before finding Lee Naylor, who swung a perfect cross onto the head of Jan Vennegoor of Hesselink, whose powerful header left Victor Valdés and Carles Puyol floundering.

Paradise went wild, but the celebrations didn't last long. Straight from the kick off, Lionel Messi reminded us why FIFA named him the third best player in the world last year, playing a delectable one-two with Deco as he slipped through the Celtic defence and slammed the ball home to equalise. The goal fired up Barcelona, but in a fired-up Barça kind of way, in that they played their usual composed football, with plenty of silky passing and speculation on the edge of the area, but little more to show for it than a couple of wasted opportunities from Ronaldinho and Henry that sailed over the bar.

It was nothing to worry Celtic, and for the umpteenth time this season, the Catalans were to pay the price for their complacency. McGeady, dancing around with such ease in midfield that you would be forgiven for imagining Celtic were playing Gretna and not Barça, started the move that led to the home side's second.

FIRST LEG MATCH STATS

CELTIC 2-3 FC BARCELONA

WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 20, CELTIC PARK (ATTENDANCE 58,345)

CELTIC: BORUC, CADDIS (WILSON 61), CALDWELL, MCMANUS, NAYLOR, NAKAMURA, HARTLEY (DONATI 65), ROBSON, MCGEADY, VENNEGOOR OF HESSELINK (SAMARAS 55), McDONALD. **SUBS NOT USED:** MARK BROWN, SNO, KILLEN, O'DEA

BARCELONA: VALDES, PUYOL, MILITO, MARQUEZ, ABIDAL, INIESTA, TOURE YAYA, DECO (XAVI 65), MESSI, HENRY (GUDJOHNSEN 88), RONALDINHO (ETO'o 73). **SUBS NOT USED:** PINTO, SYLVINHO, GIOVANNI, THURAM

GOALS: VENNEGOOR OF HESSELINK 15 (1-0), MESSI 18 (1-1), ROBSON 38 (2-1), HENRY 52 (2-2), MESSI 79 (2-3)

REFEREE: PETER FROJDFELDT (SWEDEN)

YELLOW CARDS: HARTLEY, SAMARAS (CELTIC); MESSI, DECO (BARÇA)

SHOTS ON GOAL: CELTIC 3 BARCELONA 9

SHOTS WIDE: CELTIC 1 BARCELONA 10

FOULS COMMITTED: CELTIC 17 BARCELONA 9

CORNERS: CELTIC 1 BARCELONA 8

OFFSIDES: CELTIC 1 BARCELONA 2

BALL POSSESSION: CELTIC 37% BARCELONA 63%

Celtic back in front

He flicked the ball forward to Barry Robson, who made Milito look daft as he reached to send a looping header over the misplaced Valdés and score on his Champions League debut. For Celtic it seemed too good to be true, they were 2-1 up at the break, and there was very little to suggest that Barcelona would find their way back into it.

But you can never write off the Catalans that easily, and within minutes of the restart they were back level. Gary Caldwell played a dodgy pass out of defence, which was scooped up by Thierry Henry, who even had time to pause and think before thumping the ball in his nonchalantly French manner past Boruc and into the top corner.

It has taken Henry some time to find the kind of form at Barça that he enjoyed at Arsenal, but the stylish way he converted this goal suggests that Barça haven't seen half of what this man has to offer yet.

As the half wore on, Celtic made the fatal error of allowing Barcelona to maintain most of the possession (63% of it in fact) and play the kind of passing game they love. The kind of game most Spanish clubs have started getting wise to, but Celtic failed to put the pressure on them in any of the places that really count and ultimately paid the price.

Henry almost scored his second of the night, but that one went just wide, and Boruc was called upon to make a series of crucial saves, including one spectacular stop from a Puyol header.

But as Barça demonstrated just what strength in depth they have by bringing on Samuel Eto'o, one of the finest strikers the sport has to offer, as a late substitute, Celtic became increasingly flustered by the cheeky through balls and sudden breaks that were leading to confusion and desperation among the green and white back four.

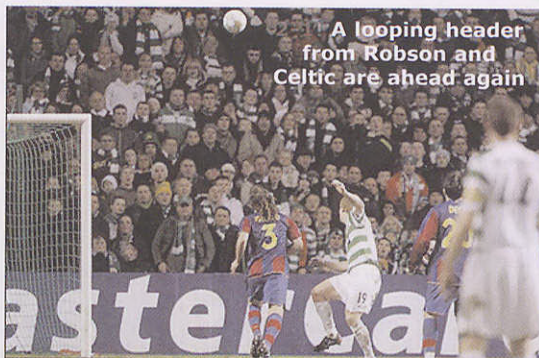
Messi business

And it was just that lack of composure that led to a defensive mix up in the Celtic area when an Eto'o effort was sloppily cleared and the loose ball bounced luckily into the path of Leo Messi.

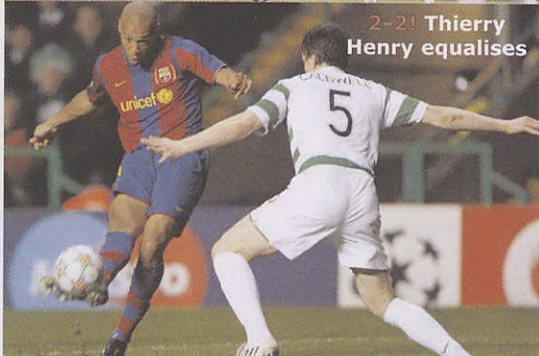
The Argentinian is not the kind of player who often squanders a gift like that, and he slotted home Barça's third of the night and his sixth of the current Champions League campaign.

Celtic had just ten minutes left to push forward and grab an equaliser, but by this stage there was very little left in them. Barça calmly dealt with everything that was thrown their way, and will now be quietly confident that what they did at Celtic Park was enough to grant them a place in the last eight of the Champions League.

Barcelona have been stuttering their way through the season, and have rarely managed to convince their highly demanding supporters. But at Celtic Park they finally looked like they have found the kind of football they have been missing since winning the Champions League in 2006. The 'Fantastic Four' of Messi, Ronaldinho, Eto'o and Henry are finally starting to gel, while curiously it was at the back, where they have looked so solid this year, that Celtic man-



A looping header from Robson and Celtic are ahead again



2-2! Thierry Henry equalises



2-3! Leo Messi takes advantage of a defensive mishap to bag the winner

aged to expose weaknesses on the few occasions that they managed to get into positions to cause trouble.

Celtic only shot four times in the whole game, but scored twice, and both those goals came from the head. Perhaps Celtic tried to be too clever, as if just because you are playing Barça, you feel obliged to have to play like they do too. But if you try to beat Barça at their own game, you'll pay the price.

The game was typified by the free kick awarded to Barça in the centre of the park with just seconds remaining. Boruc slid the ball along the ground to Nakamura, and nothing even slightly came out of it. Now if instead he had opted to hoof it up into the area to see if anybody could get their head on it, we might be talking about a 3-3 draw here.

It may not be the beautiful game, but ask teams like Getafe, Bilabo and Osasuna, and they'll tell you that against Barça spoiling tactics and the direct approach are the kind of things that might just work.

THE PRESS IS IMPRESSED

The reaction in the Catalan and Spanish press to Barça's 3-2 win at Celtic Park was understandably optimistic

PRESS CUTTINGS

El Mundo Deportivo ran an online survey among its readers immediately after the game asking the question "Do you think the tie with Celtic has already been decided?" As this programme went to press, 63% of voters were confident enough to state that they see no way back into this for Celtic.

Sport is running a survey among its readers asking who they think will win the Champions League this year. 42% have voted for Barça, 22% for Real Madrid, with Man United third on 13% and Milan fourth with 7%.

When it comes to Barça bashing, there is no paper that does it quite so well as Madrid based daily *As*. But they have to be careful what they say, so rather than directly attack Barça, they prefer to knock Celtic, and thus knock some merit out of the achievement. So, for them "Nakamura might sell shirts, but doesn't know much about playing football", while McManus "tried to stop Messi any way he could, and almost all were illegal." Apparently, according to this well-enlightened rag, Glasgow's passion for football is a result of the "climate, lack of cultural activity and boredom" that reigns in the city, while the reason Barça won was because Celtic "don't seem to have worked out why everybody is saying bad things about the kind of football Barça play."

Sport takes a slightly more objective attitude to its reporting and noted that "once again, the Barcelona and Celtic supporters spent the whole day in perfect harmony, both in the city and in the build-up to the match ... Celtic even decorated a section of its club shop in the Barcelona colours."

"The stars are back", "Barça get their 100th win in the European Cup with an exhibition of football", "Barça book their ticket for the quarter finals", "Ronaldinho back to his old self", "Great football and an even better attitude", "Fantastic"... and in English: "Yes!"

Catalan sportswriters are a fickle bunch. Just a week ago they were



sizing up the candidates to replace Frank Rijkaard and accusing Ronaldinho of being a has-been, Henry of underperforming and wondering why Messi hadn't scored for three months. One good result in Glasgow and all of a sudden the talk is of "the kind of football that brings back memories of the double in 2006."

"There is a huge banner at Celtic Park that reads 'Welcome to Paradise'" observes *El Mundo Deportivo*. "The message honours the fiesta that surrounds every game that is played in this temple of football. But Barça could make it their own to alert their supporters to what awaits them for the rest of this season. Because the image Rijkaard's side gave of themselves last night is one Barça supporters have been waiting to see for some time, perhaps since that final in Paris in 2006."

But while serving up all the euphoria that the dailies knew the Barça fans would all want to read when they woke up on Thursday morn-

CELTIC PARK IMPRESSES AGAIN

As ever the Catalan press was full of praise both for the hospitality of the Celtic fans and for the atmosphere at Parkhead. In its editorial, *Sport* said "there was a spectacular atmosphere in Glasgow's Celtic Park. And an awesome rendition of *You'll Never Walk Alone* by the 60,000 Scottish fans in the stadium. It makes your hair stand on end. Even more than at Anfield when you hear Liverpool sing it. Will we ever witness the Camp Nou welcoming our team onto the pitch in such a deafening way? It's the eternal pending issue. Also, the Scottish club also had the courtesy to play the Barça anthem."

Meanwhile *El Mundo Deportivo* said "the Celtic fans were once again exemplary in the way they support their team. Only midway through the second half, when it was still 2-2 and Barça were controlling more and more of the ball and the game was theirs, a strange silence fell as the fans watched the game unfold. It was then that the 2,000 Barça fans in the ground were able to make the Barça anthem heard in the magical atmosphere of Celtic Park."

"At the end of the game, the Celtic fans applauded Barça, gave Ronaldinho and ovation, and even Thierry Henry, even though he had celebrated his goal by making a signal to silence the crowd."

"It wasn't a nice thing to do, motivated by his recent experience when France met Scotland, and after being applauded by the home fans, he surely regretted what he had done."

"Barça returned to Celtic Park and forged yet more friendship with a club that has a strong affinity for the blue and reds."



ing, there were other writers that provided a note of caution. One column in *El Mundo Deportivo* asks "Barça also have to ask questions about the mistakes they need to sort out. Celtic scored on their first two attacks, after stealing the ball in the danger zone. And Márquez, right at the end, almost gave away what would have made it 3-3."

The same newspaper also wonders "what were Barça playing at before last night's performance?" and asks why it is that they only seem to perform to full potential on the European stage. "Last night's exhibition contrasts with the image the side has given in so many other games throughout the season. One question springs to mind. Do these people only play when they feel like it?"

Questions were also asked about the defence. "Last night we discovered McGready" writes *Sport*. "It was as if he was the best wide player in the world ... but it was just the Barça full backs that allowed him to look like the new Cristiano Ronaldo ... the defensive errors, by Puyol and also Valdés, gave Glasgow Celtic far more than they deserved. Two mistakes, and two goals. That's quite unheard of. Let's hope it was just one of those things!"

As is the way with the Catalan papers, who aren't massively concerned that there may be teams in the world other than Barça, the coverage is extraordinarily Barça-centric, with barely a mention given to any of the Celtic players, and the focus was almost entirely on the



second half comeback than on the fact that they were 2-1 down at half time.

But that's only normal, considering the readership they are catering for. The focus was instead on the atmosphere at Celtic Park, for which there are only words of praise. "The noise from the crowd was deafening" writes *El Mundo Deportivo*. "But Barça operated like a machine, quite unaffected by the atmosphere."

And at the end of the game, the paper was impressed to note that "the home supporters, who had never stopped making noise in support of the team throughout the entire game, warmly applauded the



Barcelona won, so naturally the Madrid based *Marca* and *As* didn't go out of their way to give the match too much coverage. *As*, a 48 page sports daily that caters for a football mad nation, only dedicated three miserly pages to the match. You can bet it would have been a different story if Celtic had won.

Barcelona supporters that had been following the game from one of the corners of the stadium." Leaving Celtic Park being "surrounded by the sportsmanship of the Celtic fans" was an experience the 2,000 or so travelling supporters are never likely to forget.

The Catalan sports papers generally do their best to avoid mentioning anything positive that happens regarding Real Madrid, and the Madrid papers are generally more than happy to return the favour.

So neither *Marca* nor *As* made much of a song and dance about the occasion, preferring instead to concentrate Madrid's own battle with AS Roma.

However, *Marca* did point out that "Rijkaard's side monopolised the ball for most of the game and it was the Spaniards' lack of effectiveness in front of goal that prevented a scandalous scoreline."

The interesting thing here is the description of Barça as being Spaniards, which is characteristic of one of the charming peculiarities of the Madrid papers.

Whenever Barça lose, they are invariably referred to as 'the Catalans', and whenever they win, or indeed any other Catalan sports person or team does well, they are immediately converted into Spaniards. You've gotta love the way this country works!



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WHERE THERE'S HOPE

The 3-2 defeat at Parkhead may have left Celtic with a mountain to climb, but it's a mountain that has been climbed before

There was an cloud of despondency hanging over Celtic Park on the night of February 20. Despite taking a promising 2-1 half time lead, the Celts lost 3-2 and now need to beat Barcelona at the Camp Nou to reach the last eight, and not even a 1-0 win would do it.

But although it may seem like an impossible task, Barcelona are a club famed for clutching defeat from the jaws of victory, and if Celtic were to cause an upset, it would not be the first time that Barça have crashed and burned.

The most famous incidence of this in recent history was last season's extraordinary Copa del Rey semi final with Getafe. In the first leg at the Camp Nou, Barça were majestic, enjoying themselves so mightily as they banged home five goals that they weren't overly concerned by the two they let in at the other end.

Images of Leo Messi's wondergoal that night were You-tubed around the world, the Argentinian zig-zagging his way through the Getafe defence to score an uncannily similar goal to Maradona's legendary effort against England in 1986.

Hundreds of Barça fans already had their flights and hotels booked for the final in Madrid, and many forgot to even watch the irrelevant second leg of the Getafe tie on TV.

The rest, of course, is history. Getafe scored three to make it 5-5 on aggregate. They were already through on away goals when they found time to score a fourth just for luck, and plenty of Barça fans were left with an awful lot of egg on their faces. That season they also threw away a league title that was as good as won at Christmas.

1993 was the year of another famous rude awakening for Barça. Having just

The fat lady isn't singing yet...



won their first European Cup in 1992, they were more than confident that they were through to the group stages of the following year's competition after drawing 1-1 in the first leg of the qualifying match away to CSKA Moscow. Goals from Nadal and Begiristain gave Barça a 2-0 lead at the Camp Nou in the return leg and they were home and dry.

Or not. CSKA sneaked one back on the stroke of half time, and added two more after the break. Johan Cruyff's Dream Team suffered a nightmare and that was the end of their title defence. But the two most dramatic calamities in Barcelona's European adventures are those detailed in the box to the left, when Köln and Metz both bounced back from home defeat in the first leg to put four goals past Barcelona at the Camp Nou.

Can Celtic achieve something similar? History tells us that the Bhoys have never won a European tie after losing the first leg at home. But then again, Celtic have only ever had to travel to an away leg after losing at home on three occasions in their entire history, so it is not a situation they have had to deal with that often (for the record Dynamo Kiev in 1968, Werder Bremen in 1989 and Hamburger SV in 1997). But Barça's biggest enemy can often be their own complacency, and if Celtic can catch them napping, they could yet go down in history alongside the mighty Metz and Köln.

IT HAS BEEN DONE BEFORE

Putting Barça out of Europe after losing the first leg is a big ask of Celtic, but they can take heart from learning about the past exploits of two clubs that managed to do just that, and in spectacular style!

1980-81 UEFA CUP SECOND ROUND

FC KÖLN 0- 1 FC BARCELONA

FC BARCELONA 0-4 FC KÖLN

(Köln won 3-1 on aggregate)

FC Barcelona are the only club to have appeared in every single season of European club football competitions, and in that time they have only twice lost a knockout tie after winning the first leg away from home. The first time was in 1980, when they met German side FC Köln and brought a handy 1-0 lead back to Barcelona thanks to Quini's solitary goal. But disaster struck at the Camp Nou when they were routed 4-0 in what would remain their biggest ever home (or away) defeat in Europe until Dynamo Kiev and a then unknown striker called Andriy Shevchenko won by the same scoreline at the Camp Nou in the group stages of the 1998 Champions League

1984-85 CUP WINNERS CUP FIRST ROUND

FC METZ 2-4 BARCELONA

BARCELONA 1-4 FC METZ

(Metz won 6-5 on aggregate)

Barcelona had the likes of Schuster, Archibald, Carrasco and Marcos in their ranks in 1984-85, and marched to their first Spanish league title in eleven years. But their run in the Cup Winners Cup came famously unstuck against the tiny French outfit of Metz. Barça dealt comfortably with the away leg, winning 4-2, and at the Camp Nou soon made it 5-2 on aggregate thanks to an early goal from Carrasco. It stayed like that until the 33rd minute when the French side suddenly burst into life as the Yugoslav born Zvonko Kurbos scored three of Metz's four goals to stun the soccer world in one of the greatest footballing comeback stories of all time!

GORDON STRACHAN



Celtic manager Gordon Strachan played over 150 games for Aberdeen, Man United and Leeds, and played for Scotland at two World Cups before becoming player manager of Coventry City in 1996. He also spent three years as manager of Southampton before taking on the daunting task of following in the footsteps of the revered Martin O'Neill at Celtic Park. He has led the club to two Scottish League titles.

"We'll go out there and try to make a game of it and gain more experience to hopefully become a better team in the future. I wouldn't bet my house on us beating Barcelona over there, though. We are really proud to have gotten to this stage. We'll go there and have a good try.

"We had a specific plan and tried to attack Barcelona but, no matter what level you play at, the team who passes the ball better wins. There were a few mistakes that cost us, I think in tennis they call it unforced errors.

"I think Barcelona have the best squad in the world, only time will tell if they are best team in the world.

"Tonight, we didn't have enough players playing at their very best which is what you need to beat a team like Barcelona.

"But we scored two goals against one of the best teams in the game and we will go to Barcelona and try to score again."

BITS AND PIECES

This is Bojan Krkic's last chance to become the youngest goalscorer in Champions League history. He will be 17 years and 189 days old on the night, just six days younger than Peter Ofori-Quaye was when he scored for Olympiakos in 1997.

Barcelona have not received a red card for 89 games, a Champions League record, while no Celtic player has ever been sent off in a Champions League match.

In 42 European games played at the Camp Nou this century, Barça have been beaten on four occasions (Milan 2001, Real Madrid 2002, Juventus 2003 and Liverpool 2007).

In 38 European away ties played this century, Celtic have won 12 times (Cwmbran 2000, Hapoel 2000, Jeunesse d'Esch 2001, HJK Helsinki 2001, Ajax 2002, Rosenborg 2002, Basel 2003, Marijampole 2003, Blackburn 2003, Liverpool 2003, FBK Kaunas 2004, MTK Budapest 2004) but only the win in Rosenborg occurred in the Champions League group stages or later.

Celtic will need to score at least two goals at the Camp Nou to qualify for the quarter finals, something only one other team has managed this season. That was little Alcoyano, a lower league outfit that held Barça to a 2-2 draw in the stadium. But having already won the first leg 3-0, Barça virtually fielded their reserve side for that game.

Leo Messi's two goals against Celtic have made him the leading goalscorer in this year's CL with six goals. Behind him, Zlatan Ibrahimovic of Inter, Cristiano Ronaldo of Manchester United and Steven Gerrard of Liverpool have five each.

Barcelona, Chelsea and Manchester United are the only teams that are still unbeaten in the Champions League this season.

FRANK RIJKAARD



As a player Barça manager Frank Rijkaard won the Champions League once with Ajax and twice with Milan, as well as Euro 1988 with the Dutch national team. As a manager he took Holland to the semi finals of Euro 2000 before taking over at Sparta Rotterdam. He came to FC Barcelona in 2003, guiding them to two leagues and the Champions League. He is the longest serving manager in the Spanish first division.

Frank Rijkaard was suspended for the game at Celtic Park, so it was his assistant Johan Neeskens who gave the after match press conference.

"We started very well, but Celtic scored the goal against the run of play and showed how dangerous they can be. We had to show mental strength to recover from that and we managed to respond quickly.

"I feel we controlled the match. It was always going to be a tough game for us after seeing some of Celtic's results in the Champions League. Celtic have been on a good run recently so it was important that we controlled the play. Although it was 2-1 at half-time, we were sure we could score again. We are very happy with this result against a very strong team.

"It was a great occasion and a great match. Our players responded well and we are very happy that 2,000 supporters came to Glasgow with us.

THIS IS BARCELONA

You don't hear too many groans when a team is drawn to play Barcelona in the Champions League. Welcome to one of Europe's most happening cities!



Barceloneta and the Old Port

So, this is Barcelona. The biggest city on the Mediterranean coast, with a population of 1,673,075, although if you count the metropolitan area as a whole, you're looking at something more in the range of five million.

OK, so you're here for the football. The beer. The weather. Perhaps the women, if you're lucky.

But if you've also decided to tie your visit in with a bit of tourism, then in

Barcelona you are not going to be disappointed.

The Ramblas

The main congregation point for any visiting set of supporters is Las Ramblas. After all, that's where most of the bars, hotels and other supporters will be. You're talking 24/7 action in this district, it's a part of the world that never goes to sleep. It's also a haven for pickpockets, and as you're wearing

a Celtic shirt and probably a bit the worse for wear, you should also be aware that you are just begging for somebody to try to relieve you of your wallet, which probably also means your match ticket.

The area also attracts a disproportionately large number of people that like to pretend they are statues. And no matter how much you try not to, you are inevitably going to want to take a

THE SAGRADA FAMILIA



Digital image of what it will look like when it's finished.

The single most important monument in Barcelona has to be the Sagrada Família, the temple designed by the architect Antoni Gaudí that was started in 1882 and is still being built today.

The latest estimate is that it will finally be completed in 2026, although we'll believe that when we see it.

Why has it taken so long? Gaudí getting run over by a tram in 1926 did not help, nor did the destruction of all his plans by anarchists in the Civil War. For several years, funding was the issue, while others maintained that although incomplete, it should be left as it is.

You just have to compare the 'nativ-

ity' façade, designed by Gaudí, with the controversially cubist 'crucifixion' façade, by a later architect called Josep Subirachs, to understand why some people would prefer it to be left 'as is'.

If you only do one 'tourist' thing in your time in Barcelona, then this is the one you should choose. The best bits can be seen from the street, but it really is worth going to the effort of going inside to see the construction in progress and go up the towers.

It's open every day from 9am to 6pm, and costs **€8.00**.

No reservation is necessary, but you might have to queue. Sing Celtic songs to pass the time.

photo of one of them at some point. If you do, please remember to throw a few coins in their coin-collecting thing. Because after all, it is their job. A strange job, maybe, but it is their job all the same.

The tiny fountain at the top of the Ramblas, Canaletas, is where thousands gather to celebrate Barça's main sporting victories.

And for thousands of visitors to Barcelona, that is about as far as it goes. The Plaça Reial was nice, we got to see the sea, but all told, Barcelona is just a sleazy city full of prostitutes and people that will either try to rip you off, or rob you.

But that's the Ramblas, a part of the city most residents steer well clear of and where Catalan has as good as been replaced by English as the local language.

Move away from that area and you'll find the city gets a lot better. If you wonder off into the heart of the Gothic Quarter, anywhere between the cathedral and the seafront offers little squares, narrow winding streets and the kind of coffee-shop quaintness the Ramblas also enjoyed once, before it became one of the stag night capitals of the world. And despite Barcelona's bad reputation, even at night most of these streets are actually a lot safer than some people try to make out. Barcelona has thieves, but you will very rarely see much violence.

The Cathedral

If you like your religious monuments, then Barcelona Cathedral is as impressive as anything you are likely to see in Europe. Not to be confused with the Sagrada Familia, which is something entirely different. Built from the 13th century onwards, it was dedicated to Saint Eulalia, a 13 year old girl who promoted the Catholic cause to the Romans and was killed by being rolled down a hill in a barrel lined with blades in return for her efforts. Her body is entombed inside the cathedral.

Barcelona 1992 and Montjuïc

Barcelona's proudest moment, at least in modern times, came in 1992 when it hosted the Olympic Games. The event itself was a massive success, but it also led to the transformation of what before was a fairly grim metropolis into the bright and cheery place it is today. The Olympic Stadium on Montjuïc was the heart and soul of the action. The 56,000 capacity venue was originally built as part of the city's bid to host the

CATALONIA IS NOT SPAIN

Barcelona is the capital city of Catalonia (or Catalunya in the local language), a nation of over 7 million inhabitants, which depending on who you listen to is either in the northeast corner of Spain, or has been occupied for centuries by the Spanish.

In fact, by extension, the Catalan speaking territories also include Valencia, Mallorca, Menorca, Ibiza and the part of France around Perpignan, making a total of some 12 million people.

Some 9 million of these are able to speak the Catalan language, which is as different from Spanish as Italian or Portuguese. Unlike many minority languages, Catalan is very much a living one and is used by millions in everyday life, although in such a cosmopolitan city as Barcelona, with so much immigration, Spanish is just as common, if not more.

The Catalan culture and language were bitterly oppressed until the end of the Franco dictatorship in 1975, but Catalonia now enjoys a similar kind of political autonomy on many matters to Scotland, though many Catalans will not be fully satisfied until the country



gains full independence from Spain. Catalonia has seen very little of the violence associated with the Basque Country, but such protests as the recent public burnings of photos of the king are commonplace.

FC Barcelona have always liked to consider themselves 'more than a club', and that is very much related to the way the club has been used over the years as the maximum expression of Catalan nationalism.

For that reason, many Catalans draw comparisons between their situation and those of both Scotland and Ireland, which is why Celtic supporters are always guaranteed such a warm welcome in Barcelona, while Rangers will always be seen as a kind of Scottish version of Real Madrid. Barça may be more than a club, but Celtic are no less so.

1936 games, which eventually went to Berlin. It is now home to Barça's local rival, Espanyol, who were in Glasgow last May, of course, for the UEFA Cup Final.

Espanyol generally get around 35,000 a game, which leaves a lot of empty seats around the stadium, but they'll be on the move soon, with their new ground in the Cornella district expected to be complete in December.

The Olympic stadium is on Montjuïc, the largely unsettled mountain overlooking the city, but is currently covered in concrete as it gets a facelift for the 2010 European Athletics Championships.

Worth a visit next door is the brand new Olympic and Sports Museum, with plenty of exhibits from the games, plus all kinds of other stuff such as five-times Tour winner Miguel Indurain's bike and Mika Hakkinen's car.

One place that is often ignored by tourists is Montjuïc Castle, which is hardly surprising, as the locals are not going to be over enthusiastic about a building that was built because it was

in a handy place for bombing them from and was used by Franco for executing dissidents during the dictatorship. But it does offer some fantastic views over the city and the port, and even if you're not into weaponry and killing and the like, then the Military Museum is surprisingly interesting.

A great option for getting to Montjuïc is on the cable car, which leaves from Barceloneta and provides a brilliant view over the seafront (single €7.50).

Plaça Reial



The seafont

You don't get too many cities as big as Barcelona in which it is just a few minute's walk from the centre to the beach.

Most of these beaches were an industrial wasteland until the whole area was redeveloped for the Olympics: Barceloneta and the old port are a great area for hanging out, while just up the coast by the two towers, the Vila Olimpica area has great beaches and clubbing until the early hours.

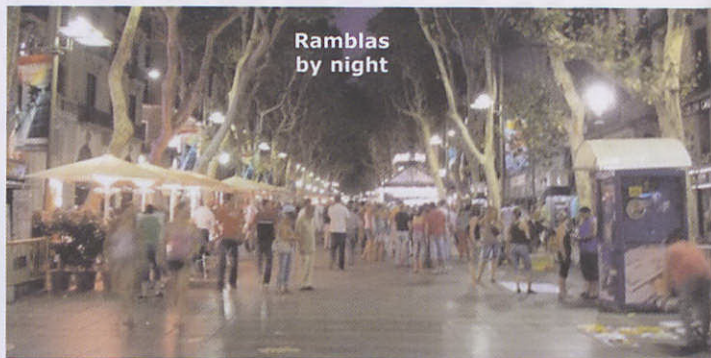
A nice relaxing way to while away a few hours is by taking a boat trip, at the bottom of the Ramblas next to the Columbus monument, you will find plenty of different options from €5.00 upwards.

Art and architecture

If you like the Sagrada Familia and want more Gaudi, then in Passeig de Gracia (numbers 43 and 94, this is also Barcelona's most upmarket shopping street) you will find Casa Batllo and La Pedrera, two of his finest buildings.

Also high on many tourist itineraries is the urban Parc Güell designed by the great man, which is free to get into and can be reached on foot from Vallcarca metro station.

If you like the arts, then you should head for the Picasso Museum (follow the signs from Jaume I metro station). It costs €9.00 (be prepared to queue), and is entirely dedicated to works by the painter who spent much of his youth living in Barcelona. This part of



Ramblas
by night

town, called El Born, is also probably the best part of the city for 'bohemian' type bars and some great restaurants. And while you are around here, it is well worth taking the time to check out Santa Maria del Mar, generally considered the most beautiful of all Barcelona's churches.

Other highlights

If you fancy a museum with a difference, try the Sex Museum in the Ramblas (number 96). Definitely a bit of a giggle, while if you fancy taking in Europe's most famous live sex show, check out Bagdad (see ad, back page). The magic fountains in Plaça Espanya are a favourite, and there are plans for them to be put into operation especially for the visiting Celtic fans.

If you fancy a few drinks away from the tourists and Celtic fans, then Gracia is a good bet, with some top Spanish clubs in a street called Mari Cubi.

GETTING AROUND

The easiest, cheapest and quickest way to get around Barcelona is by metro. One ride of any length costs **€1.30**, but it makes sense to get a T10, which gives you ten rides for **€7.20**.

The metro is open from 5am until midnight (and to 2.00 at weekends and all night on Saturdays). Bus tickets and metro tickets are interchangeable, but the bus system is a lot more complicated.

Taxis can be stopped all around town, empty ones have their green light on. As long as you're not going too far, you are never likely to have to pay more than about **€10.00**. But you can never have more than four passengers in one cab, and drivers are always very strict about that.

LINING YOUR STOMACH, PUNISHING YOUR LIVER

Getting a beer in Barcelona is not difficult. In most of the Irish and other 'international theme pubs' you will get service in English and a pint for around **€4.50** upwards.

Most locals, however, drink beer by the bottle, and the local brew, Estrella, can be found everywhere, and a *mediana* will cost around **€2.50**, but prices vary and as with everything, the further you go from the Ramblas and other touristy spots, the cheaper it gets.

Drinking lager on draught (*de barril*) generally works out cheaper still.

Cheapskates among you will find plenty of Asian immigrants selling beer by the can in the streets for as little as **€1.00**, you could even do what they do and find a nearby supermarket and make some money selling it yourselves.

A word on spirits. A mixed drink will

set you back some **€5.00**, but it will be at least three times more generous than anything you are used to back home. Enjoy.

Most bars close around 3.00 in the morning, but you will always be able to find somewhere that stays open later, and most clubs will still be going strong well after 5.00. The Vila Olimpica area is always a good bet. Unlike in Scotland, there is no smoking ban in force in Spain, although more and more bars are starting to follow the trend, with some or all areas now smoke-free.

As for food, you'll find the stuff everywhere. Catalans swear by their cuisine, but all those tomatoes and olives don't always agree too much with the Scottish palate.

If you choose to eat anywhere around the Ramblas, then you are just asking to be ripped off.

If you fancy trying some top tentacle heavy Spanish seafood, then your best bet is to head down to the Barceloneta area. Also, people eat late here, and many restaurants don't even start serving until 8.00.



IF YOU KNOW YOUR HISTORY ¹³

Get the grey matter working as we test your knowledge of all things Barça and Celtic in our half-time quiz...

1. Scotsman Steve Archibald was at Barça from 1984-88, but which other Spanish club did he appear for in 1990?
2. Celtic won the European Cup in 1967. But who won it the year before?
3. Which member of Barça's 1992 Champions League winning side is now manager of their reserve team?
4. Which club did Paul Lambert leave to sign for Celtic?
5. Who beat Barça on penalties to win the 1986 European Cup Final?
6. In season 1995/1996, where did Celtic play their home league games?
7. Frank Rijkaard managed Holland at Euro 2000. To which side did the Dutch go out to on penalties in the semi-finals?
8. Who scored a last minute goal against Rangers in August 2000 to make it 6-2 to Celtic?
9. Last year Leo Messi became the first player to score a hat trick for Barça against Real Madrid since which player in 1993-94?



10. Which former Barcelona star is pictured above?
11. Which three players were sent off in the first leg of Celtic and Barça's UEFA Cup clash in 2004?
12. Who scored Arsenal's goal against Barça in the 2006 Champions League Final?
13. In 2002 a BBC Radio Five Live Poll voted Celtic Park Britain's favourite

sporting venue. Which stadiums came second and third?

14. Frank Rijkaard's Euro 2000 squad included six players that were on FC Barcelona's books at the time. Name them.
15. Who did Wim Jansen manage immediately after leaving Celtic?
16. Which Los Angeles based club did former Barcelona star Pau Gasol sign for in February?
17. Which four different Spanish clubs have Celtic met in European competitions since the turn of the century?
18. From which club did Barça sign Ronaldinho in 2003?
19. What are the names of Henrik Larsson's two children?
20. Which former Barça player is now manager of Valencia?
21. What nationality is Markus Merk, referee when Celtic entertained Barcelona in the 2004 Champions league game?
22. Which two Scottish clubs did Barça meet in pre-season friendlies last summer?
23. Name Celtic's five different shirt sponsors since 1984.
24. Who were the only two Scottish players in the Celtic line-up for the 2003 UEFA Cup Final?
25. U2 played at the Camp Nou in 2005. What was the name of the tour?
26. Who did Celtic beat in the semi finals of the 1967 European Cup?
27. Which Barcelona player divorced English model Claire Merry last year?
28. Who scored Manchester United's two late goals to win the 1999 Champions League Final played at the Camp Nou?
29. Apart from Barcelona and Espanyol, which was the last Catalan team to appear in the Spanish first division?



30. Which two players are pictured here?

ANSWERS

1. Espanyol
2. Real Madrid
3. Pep Guardiola
4. Borussia Dortmund
5. Steaua Bucharest
6. Celtic Park (it was 1994/95, was when Celtic played at Hampden)
7. Italy
8. Chris Sutton
9. Romario
10. Henrik Larsson
11. Robert Douglas, Javier Saviola and Thiago Motta
12. Sol Campbell
13. Millennium Stadium in Cardiff and Lord's Cricket Ground
14. Michael Reiziger, Frank de Boer, Ronald de Boer, Boudewijn Zenden, Phillip Cocu and Patrick Kluivert
15. Urawa Red Diamonds
16. Los Angeles Lakers (he's a basketball player)
17. FC Barcelona, Villarreal, Celta Vigo and Valencia
18. Paris Saint-Germain
19. Jordan and Janelle
20. Ronald Koeman
21. Dundee United and Hearts
23. CR Smith, Peoples, Umbro, Ntl; and Carling
24. Robert Douglas and Paul Lambert
25. The Vertigo Tour
26. Dukla Prague
27. Thierry Henry
28. Teddy Sheringham and Ole Gunnar Solskjær
29. Gimnastic Tarragona (relegated after one season last year)
30. Vennegoor of Hesselink and Gaby Millto.



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A NOU EXPERIENCE

Welcome to the biggest football stadium in Europe, Celtic are playing at the the 98,772 capacity Camp Nou!

There are few more emblematic venues in world football than the venue of March 4's Champions League quarter final clash between Barcelona and Celtic.

And what currently stands as the continent's largest football stadium is about to get a major facelift on occasion of its 50th anniversary, and is set to expand to squeeze in a further 10,000 fans.

Kubala can

Up until 1957, Barça had played at the old Les Corts stadium which in itself held a more than impressive 60,000. But with the passion for the game reaching fever pitch, it was believed that the time had come to build something even bigger. Popular legend has it that it was the signing of superstar Ladislao Kubala that inspired the move, although plans for the stadium were actually in place well before the Hungarian's arrival.

The concrete and iron structure cost 288 million pesetas to build,

THE BIGGEST FOOTBALL STADIUMS IN EUROPE

- 1 **Camp Nou** (98,772) Barcelona
- 2 **Wembley** (90,000) London
- 3 **Giuseppe Meazza** (85,700) Milan
- 4 **Luzhniki** (84,745) Moscow
- 5 **Olimpiyskiy** (83,450) Kyiv
- 6 **Croke Park** (82,505) Dublin
- 7 **St. Olimpico** (82,922) Rome
- 8 **Twickenham** (82,000) London
- 9 **Atatürk** (81,283) Istanbul
- 10 **Signal Iduna** (81,264) Dortmund
- ...26 **Celtic Park** (60,832) Glasgow

For the record, the Camp Nou is, however, only the 13th largest stadium in the world. The biggest is the 150,000 capacity Rungrado May Day Stadium in North Korea. The United States has four stadiums that hold more than 100,000 people, while India has three, and Mexico two. There are also larger venues than the Camp Nou in Indonesia and Iran, as well as the Melbourne Cricket Ground in, er, Melbourne.



which in today's terms translates as 'a hell of a lot', and meant that the club would go into heavy debt as a result, and suffer both on and off the pitch for years after.

Nou or never

Despite plenty of pomp, ceremony and sticking up of fingers in the direction of Madrid because we've got a bigger stadium than you, it seemed that nobody ever got around to giving the stadium an official name. The original plan was to imaginatively call it *Estadi del FC Barcelona*, or 'the FC Barcelona Stadium', but people seemed quite happy to simply refer to it as the *Camp Nou*, or 'new ground', and the name stuck. It was not until 2001 that a vote was held among club members to name the stadium, by which time it was unthinkable that it should be called anything other than, well, the Camp Nou.

Other than, of course, those that prefer to call it the *Nou Camp* instead (due to the fact that the word for 'new' can be placed before or after the noun in Catalan, if you must know).

And while we're on the subject of linguistics, the correct pronunciation of the word 'Nou' is not identical to the English word 'new', but more like the way we say 'know'. When it opened, for a friendly

against Legia Warsaw of all teams, the capacity was 93,053, and would stay that way until the 1982 World Cup, when the stadium was used, among others, for the opening ceremony and the match in which Belgium upset the Argentinian apple cart with a 1-0 win. For that tournament, the stadium was expanded, reaching its highest ever capacity of 120,000. Like most stadiums around Europe, this figure would drop considerably as new regulations for standing areas were introduced, with the Camp Nou now holding just under 99,000.

Big days out

The Camp Nou is now one of four UEFA five star stadiums in Spain. The others are the Olympic Stadium here in Barcelona, the Olympic Stadium in Seville, and Atlético Madrid's Vicente Calderón (and not, as Barça fans are delighted to point out, Real Madrid's Bernabeu).

And as such, it has seen a few big games in its days, including Manchester United's historic last minute comeback against Bayern Munich in the 1999 Champions League Final, and that bizarre day back in 1992 when the stadium was awash with Spanish flags of all things as Spain beat Poland to win Olympic gold.

But the biggest crowd ever to assemble at the Camp Nou was in November 1982 for yet another Polish visit, that of Pope John Paul II, who gave mass to well over 120,000 followers.

Size does matter

So, if it's so bloody big, how come I can't get a ticket, you might ask? Fair question, but the Camp Nou has some 80,000 season ticket holders, so less than 20,000 seats ever go on general sale (and the rest of the club's more than 150,000 members get first shout). So, although the Camp Nou sells out regularly, it very rarely fills.

The really upsetting thing about it all is that for so many Catalans, a season ticket is more of a status symbol than something you actually use that often, so you end up with thousands of ticket-less fans stranded outside while there is actually more than ample room to accommodate them inside, as was never more evident than when Celtic were here for the UEFA Cup in 2004.

The club has tried to alleviate the problem by implementing what it

calls its *Seient Lluire* or 'Free Seat' policy, whereby season ticket holders that don't plan on going to a given game can offer their place to somebody else. The club puts that seat up for sale just like any other ticket, and the supporter gets a corresponding reduction on the following season's fee.

And the system works. The club is able to cut down on the practice of season ticket holders touting their seats out to others, which means less empty seats in the stadium, and a better chance for non season ticket holders getting into matches.

The policy has helped improve matters a bit, although not all season tickets know or care about the system, and the club has found itself obliged to impose restrictions to prevent tickets falling into the 'wrong' hands.

More than a club

But as you walk around the Camp Nou grounds, you will notice the footy ground is not the only sports facility on the site.

Perhaps the most striking extra is the Mini Estadi, a stadium that

holds 15,276 spectators and is basically where the reserve team plays. Built in 1982 it is more an example of lavish over-indulgence than anything else, as there is nothing like enough interest in Barça B to warrant a stadium that's bigger than six Scottish Premier venues, including Tannadice Park and Fir Park.

The Mini Estadi does get used for the odd one-off event, such as the occasional Andorra international, but the general word at the club these days seems to be one of wondering why they don't just get rid of it and use the space for something that makes a little bit more sense.

Then, next to the club shop, you will notice a domed arena, the Palau Blaugrana. Built in 1971 to hold 5,696 spectators, it now holds 8,000, and it is here that Barça's other four professional sports teams play.

Because although FC Barcelona are obviously most famous for football, they actually have teams playing in 17 different sports, including rugby union, handball,

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field hockey, athletics, baseball, ice hockey, figure skating, roller hockey and cycling.

After the footballers, the second most important team is the basketball one, winners of the sport's equivalent of the Champions League, the Euroleague, in 2002. Basketball may get little press coverage in Scotland, but in Spain it's the second most popular sport, and two Barça products, Pau Gasol and Juan Carlos Navarro, are now among the hottest properties in the NBA.

Barça's other three pro teams play handball (a little known sport in the British Isles but widely played on the continent), futsal (five-a-side footy) and roller hockey. And next door to the Palau Blaugrana, you will find the ice rink (you can walk in for free), where FC Barcelona, one of the country's handful of ice hockey teams, plays to crowds of 40 people or, if they're lucky, more.

Foster home

But fifty years on, and the Camp Nou is starting to show its age, and plans have just been revealed for a new project to restructure the stadium. Despite Barcelona's history of producing globally respected architects, they eventually turned to Englishman Norman Foster for plans to turn the stadium into what some consider an

The future Camp Nou

amazing state of the art venue, and others consider to be something akin to blasphemy. Although the idea was more to modernise the stadium's appearance and facilities than make it any bigger, Foster's project, whose estimated cost is €250 million, will include the addition of an extra 10,000 seats.

What an atmosphere?

One of the main advantages of the new-look Camp Nou will be the roof over the stands. Not only will this make life considerably more pleasant for those people up in the

heavens of the upper tier, where it can get unbearably cold and windy in the winter months, but should also help to contain the atmosphere a little more.

The Camp Nou has always been that little bit too big and open to generate the kind of atmosphere you'd expect. Barça's average home attendance last year was 74,078 a game, topped only by Manchester United, who got 75,826 (although Washington, Kansas and the New York Giants of the NFL got even more than that). But 74,000 fans in the Camp Nou still means over 22,000 empty seats, which means the stadium rarely creates the buzz required.

This isn't helped by the fact that crowd chants only play a small part in Barça tradition.

Apart from joining in with the club anthem before the game, and a selection of lyric-less variants of the "oe, oe, oe" theme, the Camp Nou rarely manages anything more imaginative than chanting players' names over and over ("Meeeeessi, Meeeeessi...") and hurling abuse at the ref.

The atmosphere has softened even more since Joan Laporta became president in 2003 and starting ousting the club's hardcore set of supporters, the *Boixos Nois* from the stadium in order to create a more family-friendly ambience. Now that they are no longer here to direct the singing, the Camp Nou crowd seems even more disjointed than ever.

THE BARÇA ANTHEM

Tot el camp!
És un clam!

Som la gent blaugrana
Tant se val d'on venim
Si del sud o del nord
ara estem d'acord, estem d'acord
una bandera ens agermana
Blaugrana al vent,
un crit valent

Tenim un nom, el sap tothom
Barça, Barça, Barça
Jugadors
Seguidors

Tots units fem força
són molts anys plens d'afanys
són molts gols que hem cridat
i s'ha demostrat, s'ha demostrat
que mai ningú no ens podrà
torçar

Blaugrana al vent,
un crit valent

Tenim un nom, el sap tothom
Barça, Barça, BAAAARÇA!!!!

The whole ground!
Is roaring!

We're the blue and reds
Doesn't matter where we're from
From the south or the north
Now we all agree, all agree,
One flag unites us in brotherhood
Blue and red in the wind

One valiant cry
We have a name everybody knows
Barça! Barça! Barça!
Players
Supporters

United we are strong
So many years of glory
So many goals we have cheered
It's been shown, it's been shown
That no one is ever going to
break us

Blue and red in the wind
One valiant cry

We have a name everybody knows
Barça! Barça! BAAAARÇA!!!!

Match day

The main section of the stadium for away supporters is way up in the *General* seating on the top tier. Great for getting a general view of the pitch and stadium, but totally isolated from the action.

The other main section is tucked away on the bottom tier, where the sight lines are fairly good, but where the second tier floor blocks your chance of appreciating the immensity of the ground.

Refreshments in the ground are mainly hot dogs and sandwiches, and although you may be thrilled to learn that there is beer on sale in the ground, don't get too excited, because it's alcohol free.

UEFA, of course, have a strict segregation policy for Champions League games, but at the Camp Nou, where there are invariably literally thousands of spare seats changing hands, this has generally proved hopelessly ineffective. Expect tighter regulation following the organised chaos surrounding Rangers' visit earlier this season, when some 6,000 Gers fans managed to wangle tickets off the locals and got Barça into all sorts of trouble with the authorities.

The knock-on effect of that is that UEFA will be keeping a strict eye on what happens at the Celtic match, so if there is anything at all dodgy about your ticket, be prepared to face zero tolerance at the gate.

THE CAMP NOU STADIUM TOUR AND FCB CLUB MUSEUM

The Camp Nou Stadium Tour is one of the city's biggest attractions, while the club museum gets 1,200,000 visitors a year, more than any other museum in Catalonia (even the Picasso Museum).

You can either just visit the museum (€8.50 for adults, €6.80 for children) or throw in the stadium tour as well (€13.00 for adults, €10.40 for children).

There is no need to reserve in advance. In fact, you can't reserve in advance, just buy your tickets from the booths outside the club shop.

If you're looking to save the euros, or time, you may be interested in knowing that the museum visit alone does still offer the chance to get a balcony view of the stadium.

The tour is not guided, you just go in the door and follow the signs, but you can hire audio guides for a small extra fee if you like. However, it doesn't take rocket science to work out what you are seeing.

For your money, you get to see the away team dressing room (the one Celtic will be using, and considerably less plush than the home ones that you don't get to see), before moving on to the post-match interview area and

then down past the chapel where the devout say their prayers before matches.

You then get to tread the touch line area around the dug-out before moving up to the presidential box and then even further up to the commentary boxes right at the top of the grandstand.

You then make your way down to the Club Museum, which not only offers the usual club trophies and memorabilia, but plenty of other football and sporting antiques, from wartime table footy to life-size recreations, including a special section this year dedicated to the 50th anniversary of the stadium and the expansion plans.

True football fans should take the time to explore, though it's a shame that not all the explanations are given in English.

And from then on its on to Nike paradise and the FCB club shop. The **Museum** is open **Monday to Saturday from 10:00 to 18:30** while entrance for the **Camp Nou Tour** closes at **17.30**.

IMPORTANT: On the day of the match, and in accordance with UEFA Champions League protocol, the Stadium Tour is closed all day, and the Museum is only open from 10:00 to 13:00.

GETTING TO THE CAMP NOU

FROM THE AIRPORT: If you are arriving from **Barcelona airport** and plan on going directly to the stadium area, by far your easiest bet is to take the **train**. It only costs €1.25 and takes you directly the city's main train station, **Sants Estacio**, from where you can walk to the Camp Nou in less than a quarter of an hour. It works out a lot cheaper, and probably quicker, than taking a taxi.

FROM OUTSIDE OF BARCELONA: All **trains** into Barcelona from the coastal resorts stop at **Sants Estacio**. It's a short walk from there to the stadium.

FROM THE CITY CENTRE: The easiest way of getting to the Camp Nou is by **taxi**, but on match days the traffic around the stadium can be a nightmare, so a relatively short trip can end up costing €15 or more. You are better off getting a ride to somewhere nearby, Sants Station for example, and walking the rest.

By **metro**, the nearest stops are **Maria Cristina** or

Les Corts on green line 3 and **Collblanc** on blue line 2. Obviously, in the build-up to matches it can get horrendously crowded, but as long as you give yourself enough time, you should be OK. Working the **bus** system can be complicated, and does little to avoid the problem of traffic, but lines 7, 15, 43, 67, 68, 74, 75, L12, L50, L60 and L62 all pass near to the stadium.

The other option is **walking**, which won't take more than about an hour from the city centre and there will plenty of other Celtic fans doing the same.

AFTER THE MATCH: Coming out of the stadium, the queues for the metro can be a nightmare, and you haven't a chance in hell of finding a taxi.

Your best bets are either to head to the bars around Maria Cristina or Les Corts and join everybody else having a few beers as you wait for the crowds to clear (the metro stays open until midnight), or simply walk.

SCOTLAND 5 BARCELONA 3

Take a trip down memory lane and find that Scottish clubs have plenty to feel proud of when it come to battles with FC Barcelona.

Anybody would imagine that the self-proclaimed biggest sports club in the world, winner of 2 European Cups, 4 Cup Winners Cups, 3 UEFA Cups, 8 Spanish leagues and a record 24 Spanish cups would have a more than decent record against Scottish clubs, but the truth is that the mighty Barça have generally struggled when it has come to facing Scotland's finest.

The first five meetings were all in the UEFA Cup (or the Fairs Cup as it was known before) and saw Barça crash out twice to Dundee United, once to Hibs, and once to Celtic three years ago. The only time Barça have ever made it past a Scottish club in the knockout stages of any competition was against Celtic in the 1964-65 Fairs Cup.

Barça's two most recent encounters with sides from the Scottish Premier have been in the group stages of the Champions League, and with a win and a draw against each of Celtic and Rangers, Barça managed on both occasions to avoid defeat, and also progressed to the next round.

But all told, in fourteen matches, it all adds up to just three wins on the night for Barcelona, and the 2-0 win over Rangers earlier this season was only the second time in seven visits that a Scottish side has been beaten at the Camp Nou.

Hibs oust enraged Barça

1960-61 brought Barça's first Scottish experience. It was a grand season for the Catalan giants, who had the likes of Sándor Kocsis, Evaristo and Luis Suarez in the side. With General Franco at the height of his reign, Real Madrid had won the first five editions of the European Cup, and that season it was none other than Barça who put them out of the competition for the first time, going on to reach the final but losing 3-2 to Benfica in Berne.

But curiously enough, that season the defending Spanish champions also entered the Fairs Cup, where in the quarter finals they would meet Hibs, who were having a very average season. The



first leg at Easter Road was postponed due to fog, meaning the opening match would be played at the Camp Nou, where Hibs took an impressive 4-2 lead before two late Barça goals meant it ended 4-4. But it was for the return leg in Edinburgh in front of a crowd of 50,000 that this game would be remembered, with German referee Herr Malka at the centre of it. He was blowing free kicks against Barça every time they went anywhere near the ball, though to be fair he did also deny Hibs what were apparently two very obvious penalties. Hibs took an early lead, but by half time Barça were 2-1 up, and 6-5 on aggregate. Then all hell broke loose in the last quarter of an hour. Hibs managed an equaliser, and minutes later were awarded what was to be a match-winning penalty that the Barça players were, to put it mildly, infuriated with. Suarez made his discontent clear to the German official by kicking him to the floor, with several of his team mates quickly joining the fracas to the extent that the local police, 'aided' by a handful of local supporters, had to come onto the pitch and took ten minutes to sort out the mayhem.

When things finally did get restarted, Malka officiated the last few minutes of the game standing just a few metres from the tunnel with a 100-strong police barricade to protect him, and blew the final whistle while making a mad dash for a dressing room door that was about to suffer a kicking of its own from the Barça players.

FC BARCELONA AGAINST SCOTTISH CLUBS

1960-61 FAIRS CUP QUARTER FINAL

FC BARCELONA 4-4 HIBERNIAN

HIBERNIAN 3-2 FC BARCELONA

(Hibs won 7-6 on aggregate)

1964-65 FAIRS CUP SECOND ROUND

FC BARCELONA 3-1 CELTIC

CELTIC 0-0 FC BARCELONA

(Barça won 3-1 on aggregate)

1966-67 FAIRS CUP SECOND ROUND

FC BARCELONA 1-2 DUNDEE UNITED

DUNDEE UNITED 2-0 FC BARCELONA

(Dundee Utd won 4-1 on aggregate)

1986-87 UEFA CUP QUARTER FINAL

DUNDEE UNITED 1-0 FC BARCELONA

FC BARCELONA 1-2 DUNDEE UNITED

(Dundee Utd won 3-1 on aggregate)

2003-04 UEFA CUP FOURTH ROUND

CELTIC 1-0 FC BARCELONA

FC BARCELONA 0-0 CELTIC

(Celtic won 1-0 on aggregate)

2004-05 CHAMPIONS LEAGUE GROUP F

CELTIC 1-3 FC BARCELONA

FC BARCELONA 1-1 CELTIC

(Milan and Barça qualified)

2007-08 CHAMPIONS LEAGUE GROUP E

RANGERS 0-0 FC BARCELONA

FC BARCELONA 2-0 RANGERS

(Barça and Lyon qualified)

Barcelona coach Enrique Onzaola would comment later that "when an obvious injustice has been done, it is part of our Spanish temperament to show feeling." Full back Foncho, who did admit that "our players went too far" would go on to add "that referee will not be welcome in Spain. Neither will a heavy Scottish policeman who put his elbow in my eye and left it a beautiful black colour."

Hibernian captain Sammy Baird, meanwhile, said "I had one big worry when the Spanish players were going berserk. I had visions of the game being abandoned. Thank goodness we were allowed to take the penalty and finish the game."

It may not have been the most mild-mannered of affairs, but it was a great result for Scottish football, though Hibs would go out in the next round to eventual champions, AS Roma.

Simpson heroics for Celtic

Four seasons would pass before Barça played another Scottish side, and that would be Celtic. The first leg at the Camp Nou would actually mark the debut between the Celtic sticks of a man who would go on to form part of club folklore as the goalkeeper of the Lisbon Lions, the late, great Ronnie Simpson, who had actually been playing for Hibs in their heated encounter with the Catalans in 1960.

By 1964, Simpson was in the twilight of his career, and the veteran was only brought to Celtic as short-term back-up for John Fallon. And although it was a brilliant performance from Simpson that was largely to thank for the 0-0 draw in the second leg, it would take three full years for the keeper to establish a regular first team place in Jock Stein's side, and also become Scotland's oldest ever debutant in 1967 at the ripe old age of 36.

But despite those heroics, the damage for Celtic had already been done in front of a remarkably poor turnout of just 25,000 at the Camp Nou to see Zaldúa and Seminario put Barça 2-0 up after just 20 minutes. Hughes pulled one back for the Celts, but a Rife goal on 83 minutes made it 3-1 on the night, and for the only time ever to date, Barça beat a Scottish club in the knockout stages of a competition.

Not that they would stay in it much longer, being dumped out by French outfit Strasbourg in the very next round.

Glory at Tannadice

1966-67 was Dundee United's first ever in Europe, and following a bye in the first round of the Fairs Cup, they were given as tough a baptism of fire as they could have asked for in defending champions FC Barcelona. But what happened was the stuff the Terrors could probably only dream of nowadays.

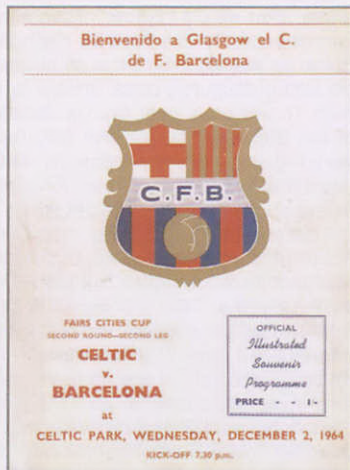
Their historic 2-1 win, with goals from Hainey and Seeman, at the Camp Nou in the first leg was the first for any Scottish club in Spain, and Jerry Kerr's side followed that up with a 2-0 win at Tannadice Park in front of their all-time record attendance of 28,000 (making United the only team in Scotland whose record crowd was against foreign opposition, unless you count Hearts' pre-season friendly against Barça at Murrayfield last summer). Dundee United may have had the dream introduction to European football, but the fairy tale didn't last much longer, with Juventus putting them out 4-0 on aggregate in the next round.

Dundee United again!

As if that wasn't impressive enough, a full twenty years later, when Barça next met a Scottish team, and Dundee United did it again! Jim McLean masterminded victories over Lens, Uni Craiova and Hajduk Split before they came up against Barcelona in the quarter finals, with few expecting a repeat of 1967's heroics.

This was the Barcelona side that had lost the European Cup Final to Steaua Bucharest the year before when they had made the mistake of starting their title celebrations before the game had even kicked off. Managed by Terry Venables, the British influenced side included Gary Lineker, Mark Hughes and Steve Archibald.

The almost entirely Scottish Dundee United featured the likes of Paul Hegarty, John Clark, David Narey, Maurice Malpas and Paul Sturrock, hallowed names indeed at Tannadice, where a Kevin Gallacher goal after just two minutes was enough to give them a 1-0 win in the first leg.



Unperturbed by this, here in Barcelona they were already advertising tickets for the semi finals before the second leg, but once again they were making their all too common mistake of winning games on the basis of what it said in the local press rather going out there and getting a result on the pitch.

Ramon Maria Calderé put Barça ahead, and it looked like business as usual at the Camp Nou, but goals in the last five minutes from John Clark and Iain Ferguson stunned the Catalans and United made it four wins in four matches against Barça and went on to beat Borussia Mönchengladbach in the semi finals and eventually missed out on the trophy, 2-1 on aggregate, to Swedish side IFK Gothenburg.

Celtic make history

Following Dundee United's heroics, it would take the best part of two decades before Barça met another Scottish club, and it was Celtic again, and once again in the UEFA Cup, a competition in which Celtic had finished runners-up to the injury-feigning Porto the season before. Frank Rijkaard was in his first season at Barça and after a horrendous start, the side was flying up the league on the back of a nine-match unbeaten run, while Martin O'Neill's Celtic were in the UEFA Cup after finishing third behind Lyon and Bayern Munich in the Champions League group stages.

The first leg at Parkhead was a game many felt should never have been played when Spain was in mourning following the death of 191 people in the Madrid train bombings

earlier that day. A minute's silence before the game was impeccably observed by the home fans (but not quite so respectfully by a small section of Barça's travelling support), black armbands were worn and Alan Thompson's goal from a Henrik Larsson assist in the 59th minute was the only one of a hot tempered game that saw Barça's Thiago Motta and Celtic's Rab Douglas sent off for a half time rumpus in the players tunnel, and Javier Saviola saw red in the second half for hacking down Thompson.

For most Barcelona players, this was their first experience of Paradise. After the game, Xavi went as far as to say that "the atmosphere generated by the fans in Celtic's stadium for our visit was the most impressive I have ever witnessed."

So to the second leg and no fewer than 30,000 Celtic fans invaded Barcelona, with the locals bemused by their antics and El Mundo Deportivo brandishing the headline 'You'll Never Drink Alone' but also labelling them "The best fans on the continent."

But despite the immense green and white travelling support, little more than a sixth of them actually managed to get into a ground that was barely half full what with the rain and FC Barcelona's lukewarm interest in a competition that lacks the glamour of the Champions League they are more used to appearing in.

Being outstung in their own stadium was just a little bit too much for the home fans though, and this gave the Catalans the inspiration to do something they are hardly renowned for doing. They all sang together. Although as usual they ran out of songs after the first one.

As to the game, Celtic were playing without goalkeeper Rab Douglas, suspended from the first match, but his inexperienced replacement, David Marshall, turned in a performance to remember as Celtic defended heavily and hung on for dear life till the end to crown one of the most glorious nights of the O'Neill era.

Celtic were back in Spain for the quarter finals, going out 3-1 on aggregate to Villarreal.

Larsson faces former club

But 2004 was not out before Barça and Celtic were to meet again, this time in the Champions League in a group they shared with AC Milan and Shakhtar Donetsk. And, of course, there was one important difference between the sides this time. Celtic hero and icon, Henrik Larsson, was now on FC Barcelona's books, but struggling to find a regular place in Rijkaard's first team plans. On returning to his former home, the Swede would say "I have had seven great years here but I know what I have to do now. I'm a Barcelona player. Celtic will always have a big place in my heart but life goes on."

The game at Celtic Park opened the group, with Larsson starting on the bench, and Deco firing the visitors into an early lead. David Marshall posted another fine performance in nets against Barça, saving a Ronaldinho penalty in the first half.

Into the second half and Chris Sutton slid in an equaliser on the hour but Ludovic Giuly's deflected shot put Barca back in front. The moment the Celtic



faithful had been waiting for would eventually come when Larsson was sent on for Ronaldinho, naturally to a huge ovation, and the great man topped the day by scoring Barça's third with eight minutes to go. Out of respect for his former club, he didn't celebrate.

By the time the return leg at the Camp Nou came around, Celtic needed a win to maintain their slim hopes of making the knockout stages. Larsson was injured and therefore missed the chance to face his former club, and with half time approaching, Barça were dominating everywhere and enjoying a 1-0 lead thanks to Samuel Eto'o.

In a rare Celtic foray into Barça territory, and on the stroke of half time, John Hartson prodded the ball home and a stubborn defensive display from the Celts in the second half was enough to ensure things stayed that way. A goalless draw with Milan in their final match should have been enough to at least ensure Celtic went into the UEFA Cup hat, but those plans were scuppered when news came through that Shakhtar had beaten Barça 2-0. The Liga side, meanwhile, would see their European adventure cut short in the second round, where they went out to Chelsea.



Barcelona meet Rangers

And so to the most recent meeting between Barcelona and a Scottish club, and that of course was earlier this season when Barça faced Rangers. It was a tough group that also featured Stuttgart and Lyon, champions of Germany and France respectively.

The Scots and the Catalans had both won two out of two when they first met at Ibrox, and Walter Smith's team went into this one with the view that they were going to play for a draw in one of the most tedious games you could ever have the misfortune of watching, with Rangers' negative tactics and desperate dishing out of fouls sparking all kinds of fury on the Barça bench and the following day in the Catalan press.

It all ended as it had started, 0-0, and the elated reaction at Ibrox was as if they had actually won the match.

Two weeks later and it was time to do it all over again, this time in Barcelona, with some 20,000 travelling fans heading down from Glasgow. The city was on red alert, with older residents still remembering with horror the events of May 1972 when Rangers were in town to play Dynamo Moscow in the Cup Winners Cup Final. A pitch invasion by the fans after Rangers had won meant that the trophy had to be handed over behind closed doors, and later that night the city centre was trashed beyond recognition. Rangers would get a 2-year ban (eventually reduced to one) from playing in Europe as a result.

Back to 2007, and several Irish and British bars around the city, and about half the establishments in the Ramblas, decided the safest option would be close their doors and take a 2-day holiday while Rangers were in town. It has to be said, however, that most of these fears were unfounded, and there were few reports of any kind of trouble and no arrests.

But what did upset the locals was the filthy condition in which Rangers fans left the city and what Barcelona councillor Javier Trias described as "the total lack of respect for authority shown by these fans."

They got through a reported 140,000 litres of beer, and empty cans and bottles generated an extra four tons of waste in the space of 48 hours. Trias went on to add that "the people of Barcelona are extremely upset to see that foreigners can come to our city and be seen to do exactly as they want without the law being applied. I suppose the reason the police didn't arrest hundreds and hundreds of Rangers fans was to avoid greater trouble."

Contrast this, incidentally, to a comment made by a spokesman for the Barcelona police after Celtic were last in town. 'I speak for everyone when I describe the behaviour of the Celtic supporters as immaculate. With all the bother concerning racial insults and hooligan behaviour these fans were a breath of fresh air.' And by the time Rangers had gone, Plaça Catalunya stank of piss. Disgruntled sports paper *As* bemoaned the fact that "last May, thousands of supporters from Seville and Espanyol went to Glasgow for the UEFA Cup Final and received a public congratulation for their behaviour from the Mayor. What we get is thousands of Rangers fans urinating in the street, drinking themselves senseless and jumping in fountains."

It has to be said that taking a leak against the statue of revered former president of Catalonia, Francesc Macia... well that's akin to a group of Spaniards travelling to Scotland and pissing on a statue of Robert the Bruce. You just don't do it.

Something was learned from this lesson, for when Stuttgart were in town a few weeks later, the local authorities at least had the decency to provide the congregating masses in the Plaça Catalunya with porta-loos to do their necessities in.

Only 5,000 Rangers fans had tickets for the match, although several thousand more eventually managed to get their way into the stadium in some way or other. Barça themselves decided to turn down the option of selling the last remaining 7,800 tickets, losing half a million euros in the process, for fear of them getting into the hands of Rangers supporters.

In fact, no fewer than 60 Barça season ticket holders saw their memberships revoked for selling their seats to Rangers supporters.



UEFA were vociferously unhappy with Barça for the way they handled the situation, saying "the responsibility lies with the home club to check the tickets of both sets of supporters. In general we look into these matters and we also urge the away support to buy tickets from their own club. This is becoming a problem because away supporters can also go on-line to buy tickets for the wrong end of the stadium."

And so to the game itself, and Barça took a seventh minute lead off Thierry Henry's hand. Later in the half, Ronaldinho played a one-two on the edge of the box and, when McGregor blocked the Brazilian's shot, Messi fired home on the rebound.

It ended 2-0 and Barcelona were as good as through to the second round. Rangers still looked a safe enough bet for second place, but defeats in Stuttgart and at home to Lyon in their final two matches meant they would eventually end up settling for third and a place in the UEFA Cup, where they meet Panathinaikos.

Barça meanwhile finished top of the group undefeated, going into the last sixteen for yet another meeting with Scottish opposition as Celtic are welcomed back to Catalonia for the third time in five seasons.

THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN

After winning the hearts of Celtic supporters everywhere, Henrik Larsson came to Barça. We take a look back at the two years he spent in Catalonia.

At Celtic, Henrik Larsson was, and always will be, the King of Kings: Barça already knew that when he signed for the club on June 30, 2004, having only just recently played and lost to the Celts in the UEFA Cup.

That was when Barcelona's accordion players had shown that they know a good crowd pleaser when they hear one, and played "Give me joy in my heart, Henrik Larsson" ad nauseam to the extent that even his most faithful admirers were starting to get sick of it. Henke had rewritten Celtic folklore, we all knew that, but there were heathens out there scoffing that he would never be considered a true footballing great as he had never graced one of Europe's supposedly 'superior' leagues.

Larsson joins Barça

But anybody who had dared suggest Larsson was one to shy away from a challenge would have to eat their words when the Swede announced the end of a seven year stint in the hoops and his move, on a free, to FC Barcelona. Celtic fans were naturally disappointed to lose their finest asset, but at the same time felt a certain pride in the knowledge that at Barça, Larsson would finally be able to consecrate his place as one of the finest strikers of his era.

But in the Spanish press it was one of the talking points of the summer.

He may have finished the previous season with 30 goals against the likes of Kilmarnock and Dundee, but was the 32 year old going to be able to deliver the same in what many consider to be the strongest league in the world?

In fact, it was even rumoured that president Joan Laporta had only snapped up Henrik Larsson because he was free and demanded what was a relatively humble salary, but that the first choice striker



role was going to be handed somebody else.

That summer saw a major shake-up at Barça. Laporta was keen to cleanse the club of any player associated to his predecessor Joan Gaspart and Louis Van Gaal's dismal second period as manager. Out went the Dutch brigade of Philip Cocu, Michael Reiziger, Patrick Kluivert and Marc Overmars.

And along with Larsson, in came the likes of Ludovic Giuly, Juliano Belletti, Deco, Silvinho, Van Bronckhorst and Edmílson.

The Eto'o saga

It seems amazing to believe that a club that had just signed Henrik Larsson of all people had the audacity to be concerned about the lack of a big name striker, but that was the case.

It was rumoured the man Laporta

really wanted was Samuel Eto'o, and Larsson was more of a stop-gap in case negotiations fell through. It was the transfer saga of the summer, for although he had just enjoyed four terrific seasons at Mallorca, becoming their all-time leading scorer, all that time Eto'o had officially been on Real Madrid's books, and if there is any team Madrid are reluctant to sell to, that's you know who.

But Florentino Perez was busy building his *Galáctico* empire in the capital, and eventually decided Eto'o just wasn't glamorous enough to play alongside the likes of Ronaldo and Raul, and considered him surplus to requirements. The Cameroonian came to Barcelona, and it looked like the Larsson sceptics might be right. The Swede was going to be spending a lot of time on the bench.

Injury tragedy

Indeed he was, but sadly that was not so much because of Eto'o as it was because of a horrific injury to his cruciate knee ligaments sustained during Barça's 3-0 win against Real Madrid. It may not have put an end to his career, as was feared at the time, but it did mean

LARSSON AT BARÇA

2004/05

LIGA APPEARANCES: 6 (+6 AS SUB)

LIGA GOALS: 3

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE APPEARANCES: 1 (+3 AS SUB)

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE GOALS: 1

2005/06

LIGA APPEARANCES: 14 (+14 AS SUB)

LIGA GOALS: 10

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE APPEARANCES: 5 (+5 AS SUB)

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE GOALS: 1

that he would be sidelined for over six months.

Sadly that injury came just a few days before Barça were due to meet Celtic at the Camp Nou, but Larsson had at least enjoyed the opportunity to return to Paradise with his new club, coming off the bench to rapturous applause, and going on to score Barça's third goal in a 3-1 win.

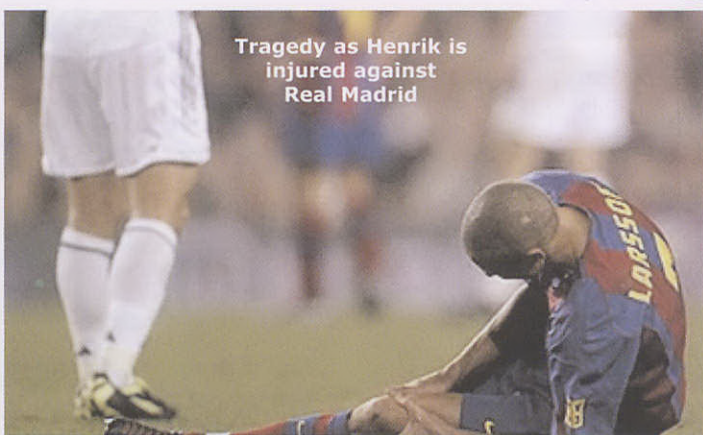
With Larsson only on a one year contract, and Samuel Eto'o doing plenty to justify Rijkaard's choice to make him the first choice striker, it looked like Larsson's time in Catalonia was going to be one best forgotten.

"I can't say if I will continue or quit before I have all the cards on the table" said Larsson at the time. But the card Barça dealt was to say that as long he could get himself fit again, they were willing to put another year on his contract. Henke had only enjoyed seven starts all season, but had scored four times, and that had been enough to convince the club that he was a man worth keeping. He spent the rest of the year working his socks off in the gym, and after a long, hard physical rehab process he was declared fit before the season was out, and the Camp Nou rose as one to applaud him back onto the field as Barcelona secured their first league championship under Frank Rijkaard.

Goals galore

It was in the 2005-06 season that the Camp Nou really got to appreciate just why Larsson was such a revered figure at Celtic.

Having finished second in the



Tragedy as Henrik is injured against Real Madrid

Spanish scoring charts the season before, Samuel Eto'o had done more than enough to justify his place in the Barça attack, while Larsson faced new competition in the form of young Lionel Messi.

That meant that once again he looked doomed to the bench, and yet his was anything but a bit part. As Gustau Liz, president of the Ciutadella Barça Supporters Club told us "in his second year he won us over. So many times it was him coming on that won games, so whenever he started warming up, the crowd started applauding." Not only was he scoring, but his sheer will to win and leadership qualities had a habit of turning games. At Barça they are used to seeing superstar players sauntering about the pitch as they strut their stuff and string together fancy passes.

Here was a player who brought a genuine passion to the game, and the Camp Nou loved it. Even when he was ordered to fill in for the

injured Ludovic Giuly in a wide position he adapted to the role without a word of fuss and performed impeccably.

Barça season ticket holders seemed aware what a shame it was that they weren't getting to see more of the player, and so although there was a sense of dismay when Eto'o disappeared for two months to play in the African Nations Cup, there was also a mood of excitement that they were finally going to get to see more of Henrik Larsson.

And Henke did not let them down. He became the first player since Ronaldo in 1996-97 to score in five consecutive league games, and when considering the amount of goals he scored compared to the minutes he actually played on the pitch, Larsson was banging them in every 90 minutes, Eto'o every 110.

Rijkaard had seen enough. When Eto'o returned, Larsson retained his first team place, especially when Messi was out for several weeks with an injury.

He ended the league season, which Barça won, with 14 goals in his account, and considering the time he actually enjoyed on pitch, that was quite some return.

Henke announces departure

By now Barça were positively begging the Swede to stay for another season, but Larsson was less convinced. He had wanted to prove that he could wield the same magic at Barça as he had at Celtic, and he managed to show that of course he could. Now he just wanted to take his



In fine company. Larsson surrounded by Deco, Eto'o (hidden) and Ronaldinho

GRACIAS HENRIK

Albert Castany, Vice president of the Ciberpenya Blaugrana (www.ciberpenya.org) tells us how he remembers a player that did so much to win a place in Barça hearts.

When you describe a footballer, you tend to describe his skills with the ball, his style of play or his ability to score goals. Very few players have the capacity to fit into a team and also stand out for their human qualities. Larsson is one of them. He is not a spectacular player, his football doesn't have the crowd on the edge of its seats, his dribbling doesn't leave fans open-mouthed, pictures of his goals aren't flashed around the world. His football is work, not spectacle. And it is because of that that his human qualities stand out.

Larsson is a player that is always there for the team. If he only gets a few minutes, he uses them intensely. If he's taken off midway through a game, he accepts the decision. Larsson makes sacrifices for the team, because he knows you win games through work and sacrifice.

He is a player any team would want. He was only at Barça for two years, but we remember him, the real fans, the ones who aren't taken in by the famous "jogo bonito", as a person that really played for our team.

What was bad about Larsson? That one day he told us he wanted to go back home to his country. The person was more important than the player and he put his family before himself.

But like a true professional he made his decision known early, rather than any last minute shocks. In this case, what was bad was not a defect, it was another quality.

I imagine he did have his defects. Nobody is perfect, but for us he only set a good example. Gracias, Henrik.

family back to his native Sweden and see out the rest of his playing days at Helsingborg (as it happens, of course, he ended up having a spell at Manchester United and even came close to a return to Celtic Park in January, but...)

There may never have been a better example of not knowing a good thing until you've lost it. The

Camp Nou didn't quite realise how much they had fallen in love with the Larsson until they learned he was leaving.

None other than Ronaldinho would say that "with Henrik leaving us at the end of the season this club is losing a great scorer, no question. But I am also losing a great friend. Henrik was my idol and now that I

am playing next to him it is fantastic."

One night in Paris

You couldn't have written a more fairy tale ending to Larsson's time in Barcelona if you had tried.

May 17, at the Stade de France. Barça are a goal down to ten-man Arsenal in the Champions league final, and the clock is ticking fast. The Gunners are stubbornly holding on and Barça are running out of ideas.

Twenty-nine minutes left, and Frank Rijkaard opts to send on Henke for the very last time in a Barcelona shirt.

And boy does Larsson deliver. One deft little flick on to Samuel Eto'o and the Cameroonian equalises.

Then one clever reserve pass to Juliano Belletti and it's all over. Barça have come from behind to claim the trophy, and largely thanks to two moments of genius from Henrik Larsson.

Gustau Liz, president of the Ciutadella Barça Supporters Club, was there that day and appreciated that it was Larsson who turned the final around.

"When he left, we missed him, and I think in his heart he wanted to stay too, because he left just after his moment of glory" he said.

"Although he was only with our beloved Barça for a short time, we don't doubt that he will go down in history as a great player and we'll always remember him dearly."



Larsson's legacy

Barça fans are a notoriously demanding lot. Just because you are Ronaldinho doesn't mean you're not going to be booed now again if they don't feel you are pulling your weight. If Barça fans aren't happy with a player, they will tell them.

They never had to tell Henrik Larsson anything. Every time he came onto the pitch he was welcomed by the kind of reception the Camp Nou only reserves for the very best.

As soon as he was on, you were guaranteed that you were going to hear chants of 'Larsson, Larsson' sung around the ground. It may not have the wit of the kind of songs the Celtic fans dedicated to the man for all those years, but it is the Barça way of making it clear that this was a player that may have only spent two years at the club, one of which was almost entirely written off through injury, but is a player that will be remembered in these parts with the kind of reverence only a player of his outstanding calibre and a person of such charming character deserves.

It was not for nothing that in his two years at Barça, Larsson's was the third biggest selling shirt in the club, behind just Ronaldinho and Eto'o. Not bad for a player that started most games on the substitutes bench.

He came, he saw, and he conquered. And unlike so many Barça players that arrived with a fanfare and left with a whimper, Larsson left by the front door, as a European champion.

"I'm almost 35 years old," he said. "I've got kids and they need to understand how we live in Sweden. My house there is finished and we need to go back there."

"At Celtic he was the Messiah, but he never proved he could walk on water," said Swedish journalist Wayne Seretis. "In 2004 he showed he could. Some pundits suspected that he was afraid of failing in a big league. He proved them wrong."

We'll leave with the words of one of Barça's biggest fans, Antonio J. Carrascosa Jimenez, president of

SPEAKING OF LARSSON

Former Barça striker **Julio Salinas** shared a lot in common with Larsson. He too had an incredible goalscoring rate but struggled to get into the starting XI. Writing in *El Mundo Deportivo*, the man who is now one of Spain's most respected TV pundits, only gave a full 10/10 to one player for the 2005-06 season, Henrik Larsson.

"He had an incredible season. He always went about his job in the right way. He spent time on the bench but never once did he moan.

His whole demeanour was admirable and when he was given his chance he took it. I can only be impressed by Larsson as a person and a player. He is 35 but he runs around like a 20-year-old. It was a shame he did not stay as he still has a lot to give at the highest level."

Thierry Henry was full of praise for Larsson after his Arsenal had been beaten in Paris by what would be his future club. "He changed the game, that is what killed the game. Sometimes you talk about Ronaldinho and Eto'o and people like that; you need to talk about the proper footballer who made the difference, and that was Henrik Larsson tonight."

Of all of the great players **Ronaldinho** has played alongside in his time, it is hard to think of any that has ever received such sincere praise and respect from the Brazilian superstar. On his impending departure, the goofy one said "I haven't tried to convince Henrik to stay at Barcelona. I respect him so much that I can't try to influence his decision. It's something he has thought about for a long time. I'm not happy he's leaving but I'm not going to pressure him at all. At Henrik's age many players announce their retirement from international football but no one I know his age is at the great physi-

cal level Henrik is at right now." Or then there is **Samuel Eto'o**, the main reason Larsson was relegated to the bench so often at Barça. But the Cameroonian also held Larsson in very high esteem, and speaking before the 2006 Champions League Final said "Why should I fear Henry? I have in my team the greatest striker of the last decade. His name is Henrik Larsson and he's the only player who I fear."



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Lionel Messi has fond of the time he spent playing in the same side as the Swedish legend. Speaking last year, he said "I learned a great deal from Henrik because he has such a strong understanding of attacking play. He's very supportive of his team-mates which helps him integrate easily with the rest of the players during matches.

"For someone of his stature I was always shocked by his amazing desire to improve his game. He would work on the smallest things and become a better player for it. Henrik is a generous person with an unbelievable spirit."

A spirit that was also noticed at his next club, Helsingborg, whose manager **Hans Eklund** said "He's a superstar but he doesn't want to be. He is happy to be just one of the team. Henke has no ego. He even helps the laundry man in the changing room."

was his amazing performance in the final of the 2006 Champions League against Arsenal.

"He left his mark among all Barcelona fans."

At Celtic, Henrik Larsson will never be forgotten. But if there is any club that truly understands why he is still held so dear at Paradise, then it's FC Barcelona.

A SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP?

Barça and Celtic are set to meet for the third time in recent years, during which time a tight bond has been developed between the clubs.

When Barça met Celtic in the 2004 UEFA Cup, it was the first time the two clubs had met for forty years. But an immediate bond was established between two sides that share an awful lot in common.

Hail Hail the Celts are Here

Celtic were formed by Brother Walfrid in 1877 as a sporting and charity association, and from the very early days were strongly connected to the immigrant Irish community and Scots of Irish descent. As a result, Celtic supporters have generally been representative of the Catholic community and supportive of Irish Republicanism.

This feeling has been intensified over the years as Celtic developed an often bitter rivalry with Scotland's other footballing giant, Rangers, who have tended to sympathise with Protestantism and British Unionism.

Top Cats

So, it is not difficult to draw parallels with FC Barcelona. Formed in 1899 by a Swiss immigrant called Joan Gamper, Barça was set up out of purely sporting interest, when football was practically unknown in Spain and Gamper would have no idea just what a cultural and political impact his fledgling project was going to have as events unfolded throughout the 20th century.

Political instability in Spain would eventually lead to bitter Civil War in the 1930s and the rise to power of a fascist dictator in General Francisco Franco. His Phalange government would go to great length to suppress all evidence of Catalan nationalism, culture and language, and FC Barcelona came to be adopted as the maximum expression of Catalan defiance.

Though Catalan symbols and the likes were outlawed under Franco, he seemed powerless to prevent the Camp Nou from becoming the focal point of Catalan protests, where Catalan flags and anti-Spanish sentiments were brandished regardless.

Some historians have argued that

this was because when it came to Barça, Franco actually took a more permissive attitude, safe in the knowledge that as long as Catalan discontent was more focused on the football pitch than more threatening battlegrounds, then it was better to turn a blind eye.

Blood brothers

But as Barça grew into the darling of Catalan separatism, a similar footballing Goliath was developing in the heart of Spain. Real Madrid, with their multiple European Cups and all, became a celebration of Spanish nationalism, and a rivalry on a similar level to that in Scotland between Celtic and Rangers would emerge.

Both Celtic and Barça have become associated with the struggles against British and Spanish unionism respectively, and both are challenged for footballing supremacy in their respective countries by clubs that stand for exactly the opposite. Catalans have long been aware of the link between their own situation and those of the Scots, Irish and Welsh. So, the visit of Celtic in 2004 was a very welcome one, as Barça and Celtic fans alike interpreted it as the meeting of footballing brethren. And this feeling was strengthened when the 20,000 Celtic supporters that descended upon the city generated the kind of party atmosphere that signified everything that is good about football.

Contrast this to the memory that still strikes fear into many older Catalans that even today remember the horrors that were unleashed upon the city by Rangers hooligans following their 1972 Cup Winners Cup victory, regarded as the worst experience of football violence the city of Barcelona has ever endured. When Rangers were back in town earlier this season, they did manage to show that their behaviour has improved somewhat, but even so their generally disrespectful attitude



and the filthy condition in which they left the city centre did little to dispel the feeling among Catalans that when it comes to the Old Firm, Celtic are the nice guys.

Swede memories

If there was a bond between Barça and Celtic before, that bond was only strengthened when the 'King of Kings', Celtic legend Henrik Larsson, signed for FC Barcelona in 2004.

Five times the leading scorer in the SPL, the Swede had played a starring role in a Celtic side that put an end to a decade of Rangers dominance, and Larsson also became the highest ever goalscorer in Europe for a club from the British Isles.

Injuries were not kind to Larsson in his two seasons at Barça, and he sometimes struggled to find a regular place in the star-studded attack. But although he would never be allowed to reach the same heights as he had in Glasgow, Larsson's impressive workrate and ability to score goals in the few minutes he was allowed immediately won over the often hard to please Camp Nou faithful.

This was never more evident than in Larsson's final game for Barça, the 2006 Champions league final with Arsenal.

Coming on for the last half hour, Larsson supplied the passes for both Barça's match-winning goals.

(Continues overleaf)



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ESPANYOL AND RANGERS?

Another interesting parallel can be drawn between Celtic and Barça's city rivals, Rangers and Espanyol. Both clubs tend to be associated with the occupiers of their respective nations.

If Rangers are not pro-English, then they are certainly pro-British, while many Barça fans consider Espanyol to lean more towards Spanish than Catalan nationalism.

This issue is very much up for debate, and is one that Espanyol fans themselves are often divided upon. Espanyol may have been formed in 1900 as the *Sociedad Española de Football*, but at the time that was not a vindication of Spain rather than Catalonia, but rather of Spain rather than foreigners (most of the members of the early Barça teams were immigrants, mainly from England, and Espanyol was an attempt to set up a side based only local players). The early Espanyol players had no idea of the impact the use of the word 'Spanish' in their name would have in later years.

As Barça became more and more associated with the Catalan cause, those people with no time for such nationalist sentiments tended to drift more towards the blue and white of Espanyol.

But although even today you will see some Spanish



flags dotted around Montjuic, it's an element that most people at Espanyol would rather see the back of. In fact, as Barça becomes more and more cosmopolitan as a club, you are probably just as, if not more, likely to see Catalan flags and hear the Catalan language at Montjuic as you are at the Camp Nou. It is perhaps Barça fans, rather than Espanyol themselves, that have done

most to forge the association between the club and anti-Catalanism.

But then a very different chain of events served to further fuel the friendship between Barça and Celtic when the latter travelled to Seville for the 2003 UEFA Cup Final against Porto and were enchanted by the reception they were given by the Andalusian locals.

So, when Sevilla themselves went to Glasgow for the UEFA Cup Final last May, Celtic fans in the city were keen to repay the favour by lending their support to the Andalusians, which led to Rangers fans generally leaning towards Espanyol instead.

So, when Rangers were in Barcelona earlier this season, the already strong ties between Barça and Celtic through political sympathies and the Larsson factor were further entrenched by the way Rangers and Espanyol seemed to have developed a special relationship all of their own.

(Special Relationship, cont.)

Nobody in recent Celtic history even comes to close to Henrik Larsson in terms of affection, and so it was only natural for Celtic fans to keep a close eye on his progress at Barça, with hundreds of Celtic fans travelling to Barcelona just to get the chance to see him play, and becoming fans of the club in the process. The epitome of the ongoing affec-

tion for Larsson was seen when the two clubs came face to face once again in 2004. Larsson was greeted to rapturous applause when he came on at Celtic Park, and returned the favour by refusing to celebrate his late goal for Barça against his former club.

Friends will be friends

All told, when it comes to Barça and Celtic, you are unlikely to find any

two Champions League contenders that can claim to have so much in common, and so much mutual respect.

Celtic Chief Executive Peter Lawwell is well aware of the connection. Speaking after learning that the Tic were due to face Barça again, he reminded us that "Celtic has been fortunate to have developed a great relationship with FC Barcelona. We have very similar histories as football clubs and in recent years have become very close. Like Barcelona, Celtic is different - much more than just a football club.

"We are delighted to be making another trip to Barcelona, one of Europe's finest cities. We would like to thank the people of Barcelona in advance for once again hosting our club and our fans in their great city. "In recent years, our fans have travelled to the city and enjoyed tremendous hospitality and a very warm welcome from the Barcelona residents.

"Many Celtic supporters travel to Barcelona to watch the Barça team. We know many stories of Celtic fans travelling to the Camp Nou to watch Barça matches in recent years, particularly after Henrik Larsson signed for Barcelona.

"We hope this great relationship with Barcelona continues."

And if Celtic are full of respect for Barcelona, then the feeling is reciprocal. Speaking a couple of weeks ago, Barça president Joan Laporta said: "The Celtic supporters are fantastic, in fact the best travelling supporters in the world, as we have seen many times. We can assure Celtic supporters that they will receive a very warm welcome when they visit the city.

"I know that Celtic supporters are extremely passionate about their club, a club which I believe, like FC Barcelona, is different.

"We know that supporters will travel in huge numbers to follow their team, but we also know the great reputation of good behaviour which Celtic fans enjoy and clearly we are looking forward to hosting the Celtic fans in the city once again.

"We hope all Celtic supporters enjoy their visit to Barcelona."

So, it's a warm welcome back to Catalonia for the Bhoys in green. Long may the friendship last!

A NOT QUITE SO SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP



Contrast Celtic's well earned good reputation in the city of Barcelona with that of a certain other football club from Glasgow. The images of their fans pissing on the statue of the revered Catalan leader Francesc Masia shocked the nation last November, and the mood in Barcelona was described to perfection in the following editorial by journalist Joan Poquí in local sports daily El Mundo Deportivo: *Dear fans of Glasgow Rangers: don't come back to Barcelona. It's not because your team is a bunch of thugs, which they are. It's not because of that. No, at the Camp Nou we get plenty of weak, boring opponents that just defend, run and foul and shouldn't get to sneak their way into elite competitions. It's because, not only that, but Rangers defend, run and foul badly. Their defenders are butchers, their midfielders are hackers and their forwards are wardrobes. But most of all we'd prefer*

Rangers not to come back to Barcelona because every time they do it ends in trouble. 35 years ago you (the Rangers fans) ruined the Camp Nou furniture and this year has been nothing more than 48 hours of thuggery, provocation, fights and low-life drunkardness all over a city that you have made as filthy as you feel like. Stay home and be sick in your own front room, urinate in your own lounge, fight with your neighbours Celtic (who deserve a medal for putting up with you) and litter the streets of Glasgow. Don't come back here because you're just not funny. Why stop there, don't play in the Champions League. You haven't got either the sporting or human class to be here. There are noisy fans that, even though they guzzle huge amounts of beer, can still make friends. You don't, because wherever you go, you just turn it into a rubbish dump. You're just not wanted.

THE BIGGEST RIVALRY?

Football knows fewer rivalries greater than those between Barcelona and Madrid and between Celtic and Rangers. Dare we ask which is the biggest?



It's a question that commonly gets asked. Is Celtic v Rangers the biggest rivalry in world football? In world sport even? Is there anything that quite matches the drama and passion of Celtic Park or Ibrox packed to the rafters for the Glasgow derby?

And one of the most common responses to that claim is to argue that the Old Firm might be a big

deal, but surely it has nothing on Barcelona v Real Madrid, an event that almost literally brings Spain to a halt, causes fluctuations in the national economy and captivates a worldwide television audience.

Celtic and Rangers may mean a lot in Scotland, but *el clásico* takes rivalry to another level.

Or does it? In strictly sporting terms there is no getting away from the

importance of the Old Firm. There is surely no other major league in Europe that so frequently boils down to a two-horse race for the title between the same two teams.

And now we're in the post-Bosman Champions League era that has become the case more than ever in Scotland as Celtic and Rangers edge further and further ahead of the pack. Between them, they have won every Scottish league title since 1985. Hearts in 2006 were the first side since Motherwell in 1995 to prevent an Old Firm top two.

On the surface, it's not so different in Spain. Since 1985, Barça and Madrid have won all but four editions of La Liga, but it's never quite such a safe bet that these two are going to finish first and second. Bosman and the Champions League spoils have had the reverse effect here as Spanish football becomes a more open contest.

After all, just this century, Valencia have appeared in two Champions League finals, Deportivo and Villarreal have both made it to the semi finals of the same competition, and Sevilla, Espanyol and Alavés have made it to UEFA Cup Finals.

There is probably no league in Europe that can boast such strength in depth, and any top flight side has it in them to beat the Big Two, and frequently do.

El clásico may be an important fixture, but not quite like Old Firm, which more often than not ends up being the title decider.

ALFREDO DI STEFANO

In the summer of 1953, FC Barcelona had just won a record sixth league title. Bilbao had 5 and Atlético Madrid had 4.

Real Madrid, meanwhile, had only ever won the league twice and not at all for two decades.

It was then that Barça signed a tasty young Argentinian called Alfredo di Stefano from Colombian side Millonarios.

The negotiations were long and complex, because the player was only on loan to Millonarios until 1955, when he was due to report back to his former club, River Plate in Argentina.

Following River's protests, the Spanish FA intervened and deemed the transfer illegal.

And in any case, they had just imposed a ban on foreigners in the Spanish championship.

Then, in a controversial twist, Real Madrid president Santiago Bernabéu stepped in and made a claim to the player on his own club's behalf.

The Spanish FA then made a shocking U-turn and decided that Di Stefano could play after all, as long it was for two seasons at Madrid and then two seasons at Barça. Barça's version of the story maintains that they only accepted this under pressure from Franco's government.

What happened next has always been disputed by the two clubs, with Real Madrid maintaining that Barça, unconvinced by some dodgy early performances, pulled out of the deal and opted for financial compensation instead.

If that was the case, they would rue the decision when they first met Madrid that season and Di Stefano scored a hat trick. He'd follow that up by leading Madrid to 8 Liga and 6 European Cup titles.

The Madrid legend was born, and that was largely thanks to a player that Barcelona fans believe was stolen from them... With a little help from General Franco?

If you know your history

But of course it's not just about how important these matches are for the championship race. There is more to a rivalry than that, and in both cases the enmity comes down to much more than what has happened over the years on the pitch.

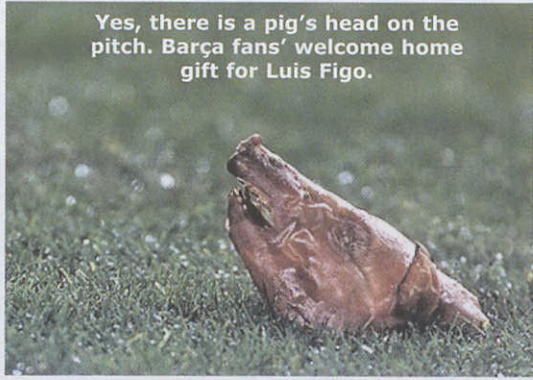
They are also clubs divided by politics. Xavi, of Barça, put it in a nutshell when he said "Celtic, like Barcelona, are more than a football club. Our clubs are a symbol of a culture and community that has not always been made welcome in their respective countries."

In Glasgow, Celtic versus Rangers is as much about football as it is about Republicanism versus Loyalism. Sectarianism and bigotry are ugly words in many departments, but have certainly done their part to fuel the relationship between the two sides. The likes of Bhoys Against Bigotry and Pride Over Prejudice may have worked hard to oust the 'Ooh ah up the Ra' and 'Billy Boys' elements out of Glaswegian football, but they have always been there and probably always will be as two sets of supporters radically stand by their beliefs and also by their football colours.

Barça and Madrid's history doesn't go quite as far back as the Old Firm's. They didn't even start playing on a regular basis until 1928, when La Liga was formed. Much of the animosity between the two has been forged over the last half century or so, as two of the biggest football clubs in the world vie for supremacy in one of the biggest championships.

But *el clásico* is not lacking in politics. Far from it. Real Madrid, as far as Barça were concerned, were the sporting equivalent of General Franco. And even though he has been dead now for over thirty years, his spirit lives on through the giant in which had a hand in the creation.

When the local government used public funds to buy Real Madrid's training ground in 2001 and effectively wipe out the club's \$245.4 million debt, this was seen by Barça as just the latest of governmental favours for 'Spain's' favourite club that show that not much has changed since the dark ages of laughable refereeing



Yes, there is a pig's head on the pitch. Barça fans' welcome home gift for Luis Figo.



decisions and downright bullying under the Franco dictatorship, epitomised by the dodgy dealings surrounding Alfredo di Stefano's arrival in the country.

Though some will argue how much Franco really cared about football at all, the fact is that Barça stands for everything he sought to crush. It stands for socialism and the Catalan national spirit. The Civil War may have ended in 1939, but for many the Republicans are still fighting the same battle, albeit now on a football pitch.

OTHER GREAT RIVALRIES OF WORLD FOOTBALL

Boca Juniors v River Plate

More than half the population of Argentina support one or other of the Buenos Aires giants. Boca are the 'people's team', based in a poor neighbourhood with supporters from the working classes and migrant communities, while River represent the middle classes. And they hate each other.

Galatasaray v Fenerbahçe

Plenty of hostilities between Gala, based on the wealthier European side of the Bosphorus, and Fener, who represent the poorer Asian side. When he managed Galatasaray, Old Firm veteran Graeme Souness claimed he had never witnessed anything quite like the Istanbul derby.

Al-Ahly v Zamalek

Who? These two teams divide Egypt sharp in two, to the extent that foreign referees are always brought in as it is assumed that no Egyptian could ever be neutral. After four Cairo derbies got so heated they were abandoned, all games between these sides are now played at the neutral Cairo Stadium.

Red Star Belgrade v Dynamo Zagreb

The rivalry between these two clubs symbolised the fragile state of the former Yugoslavia, and it is no exaggeration to claim that a riot between rival Serbian and Croatian supporters in 1990 was what really set the ball in motion towards the Serbo-Croat war of independence.

Land of confusion

So, these are two rivalries that compare well in many terms. But Barça v Madrid is just one part of the complex patchwork of identities that make up what is conveniently packaged as 'Spain', a state that is not just about Catalans and Spaniards. Madrid has no more of an issue with Catalonia than it does with the Basque Country, although unless Athletic Bilbao ever do away with their Basque players-only policy, that fixture, at least in football terms, looks like a done deal. They call Barça v Madrid *el derbi*, but unlike the Old Firm, it isn't really anything of the sort. Barça's local rivals are Espanyol, while Madrid have Atlético, and there are plenty of political undertones to those games too, but Barça v Madrid is

generally a bigger deal simply because it's between the two most glamorous clubs in the land.

In fact, one may well ask whether Barça v Madrid is even the biggest rivalry in Spain. If it's blood and guts hatred you want, you may be more impressed by the Seville derby between Sevilla and Real Betis. Sevilla the working class team, Sevilla the side of the bourgeoisie. And decades of loathing.

The suspended cup semi final last season, because an object was thrown at then Sevilla manager Juande Ramos, was just the latest incident in a rivalry that has reached the extent that in recent years both sides have accidentally on purpose lost games in order to get their rivals relegated.

There's gonnae be a show

But it's not just the history that matters. It what you do with it.

In Glasgow, when this rivalry is coupled with the admirable Scottish (and Irish) ability to rouse a song and create an atmosphere inside and outside of a football stadium, you have the recipe for a rivalry that knows few equals.

As much as Barça and Madrid may share the same tension as that between Celtic and Rangers, in Spain this is not translated into song in the same way as it is Scotland, and so the atmosphere at *el clásico* matches may even come across as muted to veterans of Old Firm encounters.

Both Barça and Madrid are watched by an ageing and bourgeoisie set of supporters, who don their Sunday best to spend ninety minutes grumbling about the referee. Listen to the Barça fans mumble the club anthem and compare that to the Celtic fans as they belt out *Fields of Athenry*, and there's just no contest.

Matters have not been helped in this respect by both clubs doing their utmost in recent years to purge the more radical sets of fans from their grounds. The *Boixos Nois* form Barcelona's hardcore section, but new president Joan Laporta has severed links between them and his club as he sets about creating a more family, tourist and corporate friendly atmosphere. Gone are the flares, flags and songs in the areas behind the goals that once made practically all the proper noise in the

Camp Nou, while though not to quite the same extent, it has been a similar story in Madrid with the notorious *Ultra Sur*.

The atmosphere at *el clásico* is also let down by the conspicuous absence of visiting supporters. There is very little away match tradition in Spanish football. Die-hard Catalans avoid having to go to Madrid (the city) at all costs, and most would never be seen dead inside the Bernabeu. There may be a few million Barça supporters in and around Barcelona, but only a hardy 200 or so would ever dream of going to Espanyol away, and that's in the same city.

Barcelona, Real Madrid, Who The Hell You Trying To Kid?

Without away fans to out-sing, it's the eleven men in white (and the other one in black) that bear the brunt of the Camp Nou's ire, and when Luis Figo returned to the Camp Nou in a Madrid shirt in 2000, Catalan television claimed that the whistling from the fans produced more decibels than a plane taking off.

And then in 2002 there was the infamous incident of the same man being bombarded with everything from a whisky bottle to a pig's head. But turncoat Portuguese players aside, Barça v Madrid matches generally fail to create anything like the

atmosphere the media and the two clubs like to think they do. Certainly nothing like you would see at Parkhead or Ibrox.

It may provoke debate and cause passions to rise up and down the country, but if you are looking for atmosphere inside the stadium, you might find more watching Partick Thistle and Airdrie United.

Hype and glory

El clásico is a media circus that captivates the nation twice a year, with sports tabloids *Marca* and *As* in Madrid and *Sport* and *El Mundo Deportivo* in Barcelona knowing no limits when it comes to winding up, and unsettling, the opposition. These newspapers are so partisan the neutral can only weep. Every Real Madrid defeat is headline news in Catalonia. If Real Madrid win the Champions League, it gets half a column on page 27. And the second goal was offside.

When 58% of the country supports one or other of these two teams, the media knows what sells, and it isn't hard to sell something that invariably involves two of the most star-studded squads on the planet.

But although the weather may not be as fine, when it comes to an atmosphere on the terraces that is enough to make your heart go... well, Glasgow has nothing to envy of the two Spanish giants.

CLASICO & OLD FIRM TRIVIA

Samuel Eto'o, a former Real Madrid player himself, was fined \$17,000 last month for his actions during Barça's 2005 league title celebrations. Taking the mike and chanting "*Madrid, cabrón, saluda al campeón*" (Madrid, big goat, salute the champion), was hardly subtle. Calling some body a big goat is a major insult in Spanish.

A **University of Strathclyde** study in 2004 revealed that the Old Firm generates £120m for the Scottish economy every year, three times more than the Edinburgh Festival.

Although **Luis Figo's** move to Real Madrid in 2000 was the highest profile switch between the Spanish giants of recent times, it was not the only one. Michael Laudrup went to Madrid in 1994 after falling out with manager Johan Cruyff, Luis Enrique stunned Madrid in 1996 by moving to Barça on a free transfer, Ronaldo and Samuel Eto'o also starred for both clubs, and just this season Barça misfit Javier Saviola signed for Real. Former Celt and Catholic **Mo Johnston** caused no end of controversy when he signed for Rangers in 1989, although he was by no means the first person to have played for both clubs. The first post-war player to play for the two Glasgow giants was actually Alfie Conn, who won Scottish Cup winners medals with Rangers and Celtic.

There is very little history behind the term **El Clásico** for Madrid v Barça matches. It is only really in the last four or five years that it has come into common usage, having been imported from Latin America, where *el clásico* is widely used to describe matches between any two top clubs.

WHO'VE WE GOT NEXT?

A quick look at this week's other Champions League matches



NEXT ROUND DATES

QUARTER FINALS

FIRST LEGS: 01 & 02 APRIL
SECOND LEGS: 08 & 09 APRIL

SEMI FINALS

FIRST LEGS: 22 & 23 APRIL
SECOND LEGS: 29 & 30 APRIL

FINAL (LUZHNIKI STADIUM IN MOSCOW)

21 MAY



AC MILAN V ARSENAL

SAN SIRO, TUESDAY MARCH 4 AT 20.45
FIRST LEG RESULT: ARSENAL 0-0 AC MILAN



The first leg of this match-up between the 2007 champions and 2006 runners-up was one more for football purists than thrill-seekers, and the return at the San Siro is unlikely to produce a wealth of goals either.

Following a tense tactical battle in the first half, Arsenal managed to make the mighty Milan look fairly ordinary at times in the second, and almost got what would have been a deserved win had Emmanuel Adebayor not headed a glorious injury

time opportunity onto the Milan crossbar.

Milan were clearly happy to defend their way to a draw as is their way and it will be at the San Siro that Arsenal may well rue the chances spurned at Highbury.

Arsene Wenger is also concerned that in Italy "the pitch will not be the same quality and hopefully the game will not suffer too much. They will be favourites but we can deal with that." The chances are they won't though. Milan to win this, 1-0.



MANCHESTER UNITED V OLYMPIQUE LYON

SANTIAGO BERNABEU, TUESDAY MARCH 4 AT 20.45
FIRST LEG RESULT: OLYMPIQUE LYON 1-1 MAN UNITED



Manchester United are in the driving seat after a late Carlos Tevez snatched a draw away to the multiple French champions Olympique Lyon.

And that was despite Cristiano Ronaldo suffering a mystery attack from a laser beam while his side was warming up.

The home side had looked on course for 1-0 win after 20-year-old sensation Karim Benzema conjured up a goal out of nothing in the 54th minute. Benzema is one of the most sought after properties

in Europe right now, and rumour has it that next season 'the new Zinedine Zidane' could well be plying his trade at Old Trafford.

United probably deserved the draw, and judging by Lyon boss Alain Perrin's comments after the game, his side are not overly hopeful of turning things around.

"The way things stand at the moment, we are out of the competition" he said. "And it was a strange goal we conceded - we have let ourselves down."



SEVILLA V FENERBAHÇE

RAMÓN SÁNCHEZ-PIZJUÁN, TUESDAY MARCH 4 AT 20.45
FIRST LEG RESULT: FENERBAHÇE 3-2 SEVILLA



Both these sides are appearing in the knockout stages of the Champions League for the first time, and the tie is still wide open after an enticing first leg played on a freezing night in Istanbul.

Mateja Kečkman and Lugano both scored early goals for the side coached by Brazilian legend Zico, but on both occasions the winners of the last two editions of the UEFA Cup replied immediately first with an Edu own goal and in the second half through Julien Escudé.

But substitute Semih Sentürk then added a third for Fener with just three minutes on the clock.

Manuel Jiménez, Sevilla coach said "from the first minute of the game our aim was to win and I think we deserved to do that, but we lost. But to score two goals in an away game makes us feel better." Sevilla paid the price for taking risks, but all credit to them for producing some of the most entertaining football in Europe right now, and they should be able to turn things around at the Sanchez Pizjuan.



REAL MADRID V AS ROMA

SANTIAGO BERNABEU, WEDNESDAY MARCH 5 AT 20.45
FIRST LEG RESULT: AS ROMA 2-1 REAL MADRID



There were double celebrations in Barcelona as not only did they get a famous win at Parkhead, but also Real Madrid got beat in the Italian capital. But although it may not have been the most inspiring Madrid performance, Roma probably won against the run of most of the play and the away goal still leaves Real in a strong position. Despite missing the injured Robinho, Raul put the Spanish champions on course for a fourth consecutive win at the Olimpico with an eighth minute goal,

but David Pizarro equalised on the half hour. Then in the 58th minute Mancini slotted home an inch perfect Gabriel Heinze pass to put AS Roma in command. But although Madrid's away form has been disappointing of late, with defeats at Almeria and Betis allowing Barça to close what had looked like an unassailable the gap in La Liga, at the Bernabéu they have been rolling in the goals, and they will still feel confident of making it into the last eight.



PORTO V SCHALKE 04

ESTÁDIO DO DRAGÃO, WEDNESDAY MARCH 5 AT 20.45
FIRST LEG RESULT: SCHALKE 04 1-0 PORTO



Schalke have a one-goal head start in the only game in the second round of this year's Champions League that doesn't feature any sides from either La Liga or the Premiership. Porto were caught napping as Kuranyi fired the only remaining German team in the competition into a three minute lead, but Schalke then squandered a number of chances that would have meant taking something far more useful on their trip to Portugal. Mirko Slomka, the Schalke coach, said after the

match that "it will be tight as we know Porto are strong at home. It will be a tough job, but we are strong on the counterattack and we're in a good position." Jesualdo Ferreira, his equal for Porto, commented that "the 1-0 scoreline is not a bad result, we can still progress and we can look ahead to the second leg with confidence. "We have had to come through worse situations than this."



CHELSEA V OLYMPIACOS

STAMFORD BRIDGE, WEDNESDAY MARCH 5 AT 20.45
FIRST LEG RESULT: OLYMPIACOS 0-0 CHELSEA



Chelsea are looking make it into the quarter finals of the Champions League for the fourth time in five seasons, but will need to look a bit more ambitious than they did in the first leg in Greece. It was the Blues' fifth consecutive clean sheet in Europe, but this was game in which it was very hard to pick out any highlights. Olympiakos may 'only' play in the Greek league, but they have won ten of the last eleven editions, so they probably deserved a little more respect

from Avram Grant, who opted to leave John Terry and Frank Lampard on the bench. Chelsea are unbeaten at the Bridge in 59 outings, but the lack of an away goal could prove costly. "They are a good team, very organised. They play more or less the same away and it's not easy to play against them" said Grant after the match. "We expect a tough game. They played the group games at Real Madrid, Werder Bremen and Lazio well." There could be an upset on the cards here.



INTERNAZIONALE V LIVERPOOL

GIUSEPPE MEAZZA, TUESDAY MARCH 11 AT 20.45
FIRST LEG RESULT: LIVERPOOL 2-0 INTERNAZIONALE



Due to Inter playing in the same stadium as AC Milan, this game has been put off until next week, which should give Roberto Mancini some extra time to work how a side that is 12 points clear at the top of Serie A managed to look so ordinary against a team that had just gone out of the FA Cup at home to the mighty Barnsley. Rafa Benítez has once again found Europe to be his saving grace as Dirk Kuyt opened the scoring for Liverpool after they had played against ten men from the half

hour following the somewhat harsh sending off of Marco Materazzi for two clumsy tackles on Fernando Torres. Then, depending on which paper you read, Steven Gerrard added either a last minute wonder-goal or sent a mishit cross into the back of net to leave Inter with a mountain to climb. Mancini claims all is not lost. "Steven Gerrard's goal is not our death knell. Other teams have come back from such deficits" he said. But he said it in Italian and all credit to the translator for coming up with 'death knell'.

THE NEW GALÁCTICOS

A look at the story so far in a rollercoaster season at FC Barcelona

After winning the Champions League and Spanish Liga double in 2006, Barça ended the 2006-07 season with their tails between their legs. Success seemed to have gone to their heads as promises were made that they were

going to win all seven trophies on offer, and ended up with just the Copa Catalunya and the Spanish Super Cup, the two least important of the lot. Complacency was very much to blame for the way they had

allowed Real Madrid to come from ten points behind to snatch a league title that Barça had as good as sewn up. The season was summed up by the shocking way in which they were able to beat Getafe 5-2 in the first leg of their cup semi final, but lose the return 4-0 to go out 6-5 on aggregate.

FC BARCELONA RESULTS 2007-2008

| | | | | | |
|---------|--------------|---|----------------------------------|---|-----|
| July 26 | Friendly | A | Dundee United (Scotland) | W | 1-0 |
| July 28 | Friendly | A | Hearts (Scotland) | W | 3-1 |
| Aug 5 | Friendly | A | Beijing Guoan (China) | W | 3-0 |
| Aug 7 | Friendly | A | Yokohama M (Japan) | W | 1-0 |
| Aug 11 | Friendly | A | Mission Hills (Hong Kong) | W | 4-0 |
| Aug 15 | Friendly | A | Bayern Munich (Germany) | W | 1-0 |
| Aug 26 | Liga | A | Racing Santander | D | 0-0 |
| Aug 29 | Friendly | H | Inter Milan (Italy) | W | 5-0 |
| Sept 2 | Liga | H | Athletic Bilbao | W | 3-1 |
| Sept 5 | Catalan Cup | A | Gerona | W | 3-2 |
| Sept 11 | Catalan Cup | A | Gimnàstic Tarragona | L | 1-2 |
| Sept 16 | Liga | A | Osasuna | D | 0-0 |
| Sept 19 | Champ Lge | H | Olympique Lyon (France) | W | 3-0 |
| Sept 22 | Liga | H | Sevilla | W | 2-1 |
| Sept 26 | Liga | H | Real Zaragoza | W | 4-1 |
| Sept 29 | Liga | A | Levante | W | 4-1 |
| Oct 2 | Liga | A | Stuttgart (Germany) | W | 2-1 |
| Oct 7 | Liga | H | Atletico Madrid | W | 3-0 |
| Oct 20 | Liga | A | Villarreal | L | 1-3 |
| Oct 23 | Champ Lge | A | Rangers (Scotland) | D | 0-0 |
| Oct 28 | Liga | H | Almeria | W | 2-0 |
| Nov 1 | Liga | A | Valladolid | D | 1-1 |
| Nov 4 | Liga | H | Real Betis | W | 3-0 |
| Nov 7 | Champ Lge | H | Rangers (Scotland) | W | 2-0 |
| Nov 10 | Liga | A | Getafe | L | 0-2 |
| Nov 13 | Copa del Rey | A | Alcoyano | W | 3-0 |
| Nov 24 | Liga | H | Recreativo Huelva | W | 3-0 |
| Nov 27 | Champ Lge | A | Olympique Lyon (France) | D | 2-2 |
| Dec 1 | Liga | A | Espanyol | D | 1-1 |
| Dec 9 | Liga | W | Deportivo La Coruña | W | 2-1 |
| Dec 12 | Champ Lge | H | Stuttgart (Germany) | W | 2-1 |
| Dec 15 | Liga | A | Valencia | W | 3-0 |
| Dec 23 | Liga | H | Real Madrid | L | 0-1 |
| Jan 2 | Copa del Rey | H | Alcoyano | D | 2-2 |
| Jan 5 | Liga | A | Real Mallorca | W | 2-0 |
| Jan 9 | Copa del Rey | A | Sevilla | D | 1-1 |
| Jan 12 | Liga | H | Murcia | W | 4-0 |
| Jan 15 | Copa del Rey | H | Sevilla | D | 0-0 |
| Jan 20 | Liga | H | Racing Santander | W | 1-0 |
| Jan 24 | Copa del Rey | A | Villarreal | D | 1-1 |
| Jan 26 | Liga | A | Athletic Bilbao | D | 2-2 |
| Jan 30 | Copa del Rey | H | Villarreal | D | 0-0 |
| Feb 3 | Liga | H | Osasuna | W | 1-0 |
| Feb 10 | Liga | A | Sevilla | D | 1-1 |
| Feb 16 | Liga | A | Real Zaragoza | W | 2-1 |
| Feb 19 | Champ Lge | A | Celtic (Scotland) | W | 3-2 |
| Feb 24 | Liga | H | Levante | | |
| Mar 1 | Liga | A | Atletico Madrid | | |

Hooray Henry

The changes were ringed over the summer, and the most talked about signing was Thierry Henry from Arsenal for £16.1 million. Adding the French international meant Barça now have an embarrassment of riches up front in the form of Henry, Samuel Eto'o, Ronaldinho and Lionel Messi, all of whom have been named in the top three of the FIFA World Player award at some point or other. Real Madrid may have coined the phrase *galácticos*, but the phenomenon was now more of a Barcelona thing.

The attack was further bolstered by the promotion from the reserves of two of the most promising talents in world football, Giovanni dos Santos and Bojan Krkic. Less of a song and dance was made about the arrivals of Yaya Touré from Monaco, Eric Abidal from Olympique Lyon and Gabriel Milito from Zaragoza, but these three have proved as important as any of the new arrivals, as they helped the side to their best defensive record over the first half of a league season in 2 decades.

The season began with Barça struggling to get into rhythm. At the Camp Nou they seemed unstoppable, winning all seven of their first home games, and usually by two or three goals, but questions were asked about the side's poor performances on the road. They only managed to win one of their first seven away fixtures (at bottom of the table Levante), with the likes of Getafe, Valladolid and Osasuna showing that for all their star offerings, Barça don't like it up 'em. Meanwhile, local rivals Espanyol, in the middle of a club record 14 match unbeaten spell, managed to hold Barça to a 1-1 draw on Montjuic.



Thierry Henry scores against Rangers

Champions League Group Stage

In Europe, Barcelona found themselves in the group of death, joined by the current champions of France and Germany, Olympique Lyon and Stuttgart. With that kind of competition, Rangers weren't expected to stand a chance.

But as it turned out, Barcelona cruised through the group without losing a game or too much sweat. Lyon may have won the last six French championships, but they were no match for the Catalans on the opening day, as Barça cruised to a simple 3-0 win. Stuttgart away was expected to prove trickier, but another workmanlike rather than spectacular performance produced a 2-0 win for Barça thanks to goals scored by Puyol and Messi.

And so on to Rangers, who had surprisingly also won their first two games, and had no intention of doing anything with the Barça match other than play out a 0-0 draw.

Rangers were vehemently criticised in the Catalan press for their negative tactics, but Barça didn't have much to offer at Ibrox either, and the goalless draw suited both sides.

The return match in Barcelona was yet another game to forget. Rangers were so poor that the Barça fans were left scratching their heads as to what all the fuss was about. The Scottish side was hopelessly out of its depth as Ronaldinho provided a masterclass in football, and Henry and Messi supplied the goals.

That was Barça as good as qualified, and their minds were more on the Liga than the Champions league as they played out their last two matches.

The trip to Lyon got off to an electric start with Iniesta scoring after just 4 minutes, and Juninho replying with a trademark free kick just three minutes later. Messi restored the lead for Barça early in the second half, but a late penalty from Juninho meant it all ended 2-2. But following Stuttgart's win over Rangers, that point was enough to ensure that Barça would qualify and as group winners.

With nothing to play for, all Barça fans were interested in finding out from the Stuttgart game as whether Bojan, who was already the youngest player ever to appear in the Champions League, could also become the youngest player to score in it.

He could not, but Barça still won the game, 3-1, with goals from Giovanni, Ronaldinho and Eto'o.

Defeat in El Clásico

Back in the league, and despite their poor away form, Barcelona were still second, but Real Madrid were slowly extending their lead. The chance to cut into that came in the *clásico* just two days before Christmas, but the festive period was ruined in Catalonia when Madrid claimed a 1-0 away win thanks to Julio Baptista's wonder goal. Barça have only beaten Madrid once in their last eight meetings at the Camp Nou.

The season has not been helped by injuries, with all of Eto'o, Messi, Ronaldinho, Deco and Henry having been sidelined at some point. Losing Eto'o and Touré to the African Nations Cup did not help either, while there have been rumours about how happy Ronaldinho and Deco are at the club.

With arguably the finest strike-force in world football, Barça have been struggling to find the goals. The defence may be strong, but the midfield lacks a convincing shape, the attack is uninspired, and the local press is already speculating about possible replacements for Frank Rijkaard.

When Madrid moved into a commanding 9-point lead, it really did look like game over as far as Barcelona's championships hopes were concerned. But recent losses for Madrid away to Almería and Betis have helped close the gap. Like in the Scottish Premier, no fat ladies are singing quite yet!

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE 2007-2008 GROUP E

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|----------------------|---|---|---|---|----|----|-----------|
| Barcelona | 6 | 4 | 2 | 0 | 12 | 3 | 14 |
| Lyon | 6 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 11 | 10 | 10 |
| Rangers | 6 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 7 | 9 | 7 |
| VfB Stuttgart | 6 | 1 | 0 | 5 | 7 | 15 | 3 |

PRIMERA DIVISIÓN TABLE 2007-2008

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|-------------------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|-----------|
| Real Madrid | 24 | 18 | 2 | 4 | 54 | 20 | 56 |
| Barcelona | 24 | 15 | 6 | 3 | 44 | 16 | 51 |
| Villarreal | 24 | 13 | 4 | 7 | 41 | 34 | 43 |
| Atlético Madrid | 24 | 12 | 5 | 7 | 39 | 25 | 41 |
| Espanyol | 24 | 11 | 6 | 7 | 35 | 30 | 39 |
| Sevilla | 24 | 11 | 3 | 10 | 46 | 33 | 36 |
| Almería | 24 | 10 | 6 | 8 | 21 | 21 | 36 |
| Racing Santander | 24 | 9 | 8 | 7 | 23 | 25 | 35 |
| Valencia | 24 | 10 | 4 | 10 | 27 | 34 | 34 |
| Zaragoza | 24 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 36 | 38 | 29 |
| Mallorca | 24 | 6 | 11 | 7 | 33 | 35 | 29 |
| Athletic Bilbao | 24 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 22 | 24 | 29 |
| Getafe | 24 | 8 | 5 | 11 | 28 | 32 | 29 |
| Betis | 24 | 7 | 7 | 10 | 26 | 35 | 28 |
| Recreativo | 24 | 7 | 7 | 10 | 23 | 33 | 28 |
| Valladolid | 24 | 7 | 7 | 10 | 31 | 42 | 28 |
| Osasuna | 24 | 7 | 5 | 12 | 25 | 30 | 26 |
| Deportivo | 24 | 6 | 6 | 12 | 26 | 37 | 24 |
| Murcia | 24 | 5 | 8 | 11 | 20 | 33 | 23 |
| Levante | 24 | 4 | 4 | 16 | 19 | 42 | 16 |

Does not include games played on February 4 or March 1

OBRIGADO BENFICA!

The story so far from the green side of Glasgow

Celtic came into the 2007-08 season after winning the previous season's Scottish league title, and their fifth in seven years, at an absolute canter.

In fact, Paddy Power were already

paying out on a Celtic championship victory as early as November, and the Bhoys eventually won the league by a margin of 12 points on Rangers.

They had then gone on to com-

plete the double with a 1-0 win over Dunfermline in the Scottish Cup Final, and the season had also seen them reach the knockout stages of the Champions League for the first time ever, going out to AC Milan after extra time.

Life after Lennon

The most important loss to the squad over the close season was captain Neil Lennon, who after seven years wearing the hoops moved south to Nottingham Forest. But the side was bolstered by the acquisitions of two antipodeans in Australian Scott McDonald and New Zealander Chris Killen, as well as Hibernian hero Scott Brown and Italian Massimo Donati.

The season was barely under way when Celtic's Champions League challenge began with a tense qualifying tie against Spartak Moscow. After a 1-1 draw on the artificial turf of the Luzhniko Stadium, it was back to Celtic Park for another 1-1 draw (with a Paul Hartley goal of all things) and a penalty shootout in which two crucial saves from Artur Boruc proved the key.

Nakamura knackered

The downside to that match was a knee injury to Shunsuke Nakamura ("he eats chow mein, votes..."), the goalscoring hero of the previous season's campaign and winner of all the major player of the year awards in the country. That injury has plagued most of the Japanese striker's season, and after it was further aggravated against Motherwell, he sat out a full three months of the campaign. But that game with Motherwell also consolidated the role of the latest goalscoring machine to grace the hoops. Scott McDonald scored his second hat trick in a week against the club he had left to join Celtic for £700,000 in the summer, and has gone on to be the success story of the season at Celtic Park. 'Skippy' is running away at the top of the league scoring charts, and after being named man of the match on eight

CELTIC FC RESULTS 2007-2008

| | | | | | |
|---------|--------------|---|--------------------------------|---|-----|
| July 5 | Friendly | A | FC Basel (Switzerland) | W | 1-0 |
| July 7 | Friendly | A | Young Boys (Switzer'd) | L | 1-4 |
| July 13 | Friendly | A | Peterborough (England) | W | 2-1 |
| July 15 | Friendly | A | QPR (England) | W | 5-1 |
| July 19 | Friendly | A | MLS All-Stars (USA) | L | 0-2 |
| July 22 | Friendly | A | Chicago Fire (USA) | D | 1-1 |
| July 26 | Friendly | A | Newcastle United | L | 1-4 |
| July 29 | Friendly | H | Parma (Italy) | W | 1-0 |
| Aug 5 | SPL | H | Kilmarnock | D | 0-0 |
| Aug 11 | SPL | A | Falkirk | W | 4-1 |
| Aug 15 | Champs Lge | A | Spartak Moscow (Russia) | D | 1-1 |
| Aug 19 | SPL | A | Aberdeen | W | 3-1 |
| Aug 25 | SPL | H | Hearts | W | 5-0 |
| Aug 29 | Champs Lge | H | Spartak Moscow | D | 1-1 |
| Sept 2 | SPL | A | St. Mirren | W | 5-1 |
| Sept 15 | SPL | H | Inverness Caledonian | W | 5-0 |
| Sept 18 | Champs Lge | A | Shak Donetsk (Ukraine) | L | 0-2 |
| Sept 23 | SPL | A | Hibernian | L | 2-3 |
| Sept 26 | League Cup | A | Dundee | W | 2-1 |
| Sept 29 | SPL | H | Dundee United | W | 3-0 |
| Oct 3 | Champs Lge | H | AC Milan (Italy) | W | 2-1 |
| Oct 7 | SPL | A | Gretna | W | 2-1 |
| Oct 20 | SPL | A | Rangers | L | 0-3 |
| Oct 24 | Champs Lge | A | Benfica (Portugal) | L | 0-1 |
| Oct 27 | SPL | H | Motherwell | W | 3-0 |
| Oct 31 | League Cup | H | Hearts | L | 0-2 |
| Nov 3 | SPL | A | Kilmarnock | W | 2-1 |
| Nov 6 | Champs Lge | H | Benfica (Portugal) | W | 1-0 |
| Nov 24 | SPL | H | Aberdeen | W | 3-0 |
| Nov 28 | Champs Lge | H | Shak Donetsk (Ukraine) | W | 2-1 |
| Dec 1 | SPL | A | Hearts | D | 1-1 |
| Dec 4 | Champs Lge | A | AC Milan (Italy) | L | 0-1 |
| Dec 8 | SPL | H | St. Mirren | D | 1-1 |
| Dec 11 | SPL | H | Falkirk | W | 4-0 |
| Dec 16 | SPL | A | Inverness Caledonian | L | 2-3 |
| Dec 22 | SPL | H | Hibernian | D | 1-1 |
| Dec 26 | SPL | A | Dundee United | W | 2-0 |
| Dec 29 | SPL | H | Gretna | W | 3-0 |
| Jan 12 | Scottish Cup | H | Stirling Albion | W | 3-0 |
| Jan 19 | SPL | H | Kilmarnock | W | 1-0 |
| Jan 27 | SPL | A | Falkirk | W | 1-0 |
| Feb 3 | Scottish Cup | A | Kilmarnock | W | 5-1 |
| Feb 9 | SPL | A | Aberdeen | W | 5-1 |
| Feb 16 | SPL | H | Hearts | W | 3-0 |
| Feb 20 | Champs Lge | H | Barcelona (Spain) | L | 2-3 |
| Feb 23 | SPL | A | St. Mirren | | |
| Feb 27 | SPL | H | Inverness Caledonian | | |
| March 1 | SPL | A | Hibernian | | |



Dida is stretchered off at Celtic Park

occasions before Christmas, he was named BBC Sportsound Player of the Year for 2007.

A 0-0 draw at home to Kilmarnock may not have been the start to the league season Celtic had been looking for, but things improved considerably after that, including a terrific three match run in which all of Hearts, St Mirren and Caley Thistle were subjected to five-goal routings by the boys in green.

But in Scotland, where the two Old Firm sides usually win every week, every dropped point can matter, and the 3-2 loss to Hibernian was especially painful and put Rangers into pole position.

And so to October 20 and the first Old Firm match of the season, which to the delight of Scottish football fans living in Spain was shown here on terrestrial television for the first time. But it was a day Celtic fans will prefer not to remember. They lost 3-0 and it hurt to have to admit when it was all over that, on the day at least, the best side had won. Ouch.

Champions League group stage

In the Champions League, Celtic found themselves in a freakishly similar group to the one they were in in 2004-05, with AC Milan and Shakhtar Donetsk there again, and Benfica taking the place of Barcelona (who, of course, they will now meet in the second round instead).

Matters got off to a disappointing start with a 2-0 defeat in the Ukraine, but Celtic made amends with a 2-1 win over champions AC Milan in Glasgow. That match will, of course, be remembered most for the incidents that followed McDonald's last minute winner, when Celtic fan Robert McHenry ran onto the pitch and lightly brushed Milan keeper Dida. The Brazilian started chasing the fan (who has been banned from Celtic for life), but then changed his mind and instead decided to go down like a ton of bricks, feign injury and be stretchered off for 'treatment'. UEFA slapped a two-match on him for his lack of "loyalty, integrity and sportsmanship", which was later reduced to one.

Celtic would slump to the bottom of the group after conceding a late goal in Portugal, and the fact that Rangers were at that point joint top of their group with an unbeaten record did little to cheer the dampened spirits. But Celtic got their revenge on Benfica with an Aiden McGeady winner to win 1-0 in game four, and things were looking up again.

The second to last game almost marked the end of Celtic's European adventure as they went a goal

down at home to Shakhtar after just four minutes. But Jiri Jarošik managed to level affairs and it all went wild in Paradise when Donati made it 2-1 with the last kick of the game.

Celtic faced the daunting challenge of needing a draw at the San Siro to guarantee qualification for the knockout stage. They gave Milan a good run for Berlusconi's money, but a 70th minute strike from Inzaghi meant Celtic were now depending on Benfica getting something from their trip to Donetsk. And, joy of joys, the Portuguese side delivered the goods with a 2-1 win that meant that despite losing all three of their away fixtures, Celtic were into the hat for the last sixteen. And to make matters even better, Rangers were not.

New faces

Full attention returned to the league, and December brought about an uncharacteristically poor run for Strachan's side, in which just six points were collected out of a possible fifteen. This included an inexplicable disaster when they allowed Caley to come back from 2-0 down to win 3-2 and claim their first league win over Celtic, and allowed Rangers to move back into top spot.

The transfer window involved plenty of shuffling of the pack, with three particularly important signings in Barry Robson (Dundee Utd's goalscoring midfielder), Andreas Hinkel (from Sevilla, who is cup-tied for the Champions League) and Georgios Samaras of Greece.

Since that poor run in December, matters have improved considerably, with a run of six staright league wins conceding just one goal in the process, with two convincing wins in the Scottish Cup as well. Rangers still lead in Scotland, but there are also two Old Firm games yet to come.

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE 2007-2008 GROUP D

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|-----------------|---|---|---|---|----|----|-----------|
| Milan | 6 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 12 | 5 | 13 |
| Celtic | 6 | 3 | 0 | 3 | 5 | 6 | 9 |
| Benfica | 6 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Shakhtar | 6 | 2 | 0 | 4 | 6 | 11 | 6 |

SCOTTISH PREMIER TABLE 2007-2008

| | P | W | D | L | F | A | Pts |
|----------------------|----|----|---|----|----|----|-----------|
| Rangers | 23 | 18 | 2 | 3 | 54 | 17 | 56 |
| Celtic | 23 | 16 | 4 | 3 | 58 | 18 | 52 |
| Dundee United | 25 | 12 | 3 | 10 | 38 | 32 | 39 |
| Motherwell | 22 | 12 | 2 | 8 | 32 | 28 | 38 |
| Aberdeen | 25 | 9 | 6 | 10 | 29 | 38 | 33 |
| Hibernian | 24 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 34 | 32 | 32 |
| Inverness CT | 24 | 10 | 2 | 12 | 32 | 37 | 32 |
| Falkirk | 25 | 9 | 5 | 11 | 34 | 40 | 32 |
| Hearts | 25 | 8 | 6 | 11 | 36 | 40 | 30 |
| St. Mirren | 23 | 7 | 5 | 11 | 17 | 37 | 26 |
| Kilmarnock | 25 | 5 | 7 | 13 | 24 | 36 | 22 |
| Gretna | 24 | 3 | 4 | 17 | 21 | 54 | 13 |

Does not include games played on February 23, February 27 or March 1

FC BARCELONA - THE SQUAD

1 VICTOR VALDÉS



POSITION: Goalkeeper
NATIONALITY: Spanish
DATE OF BIRTH: Jan 14, 1982
BARÇA DEBUT: 2002
FORMER CLUBS: Barça B
INTERNATIONAL CAPS: 0

The first choice keeper since 2003, last season Valdés equalled Andoni Zubizarreta's record of playing every minute of a league season for Barça, and holds the club record of going 466 minutes without conceding a goal in Europe. But it is often argued that he is not the world class stopper Barça deserve and rarely even makes the bench for Spain.

4 RAFAEL MÁRQUEZ



POSITION: Defender
NATIONALITY: Mexican
DATE OF BIRTH: Feb 13, 1979
BARÇA DEBUT: 2003
FORMER CLUBS: Atlas, Monaco
INTERNATIONAL CAPS: 79

One of the few Mexican internationals playing in Europe, he was captain of his national team at two World Cups, and a league winner with Monaco the year before he came to Barça. Also known to play in midfield, he was cited for a transfer last summer after his season was blighted by injury. However, a great Copa America convinced Barça to keep him.

6 XAVI HERNÁNDEZ



POSITION: Midfielder
NATIONALITY: Spanish
DATE OF BIRTH: Jan 25, 1982
BARÇA DEBUT: 1998
FORMER CLUBS: Barça B
INTERNATIONAL CAPS: 51

Joined Barça aged just 11 and was heralded as the natural successor to Josep Guardiola as the team's central playmaker, while also able to assume a more defensive role. Perhaps gone a little off the boil since his serious injury in 2006 but still knows how to supply the perfect pass. He's Barça's longest serving first team member, having debuted in the 1998 Super Cup.

3 GABRIEL MILITO



POSITION: Defender
NATIONALITY: Argentinian
DATE OF BIRTH: Sep 7, 1980
BARÇA DEBUT: 2007
FORMER CLUBS: Independiente, Real Zaragoza
INTERNATIONAL CAPS: 32

Originally came to Spain in 2003 to sign for Real Madrid but was rejected after failing a medical and not being *galáctico* enough, and ended up at Zaragoza along with his brother Diego. Joined Barça last summer for €20.5 million and has earned a regular place in the team, but is only a peripheral player for Argentina.

5 CARLES PUYOL



POSITION: Defender
NATIONALITY: Spanish
DATE OF BIRTH: Apr 13, 1978
BARÇA DEBUT: 1999
FORMER CLUBS: Barça B
INTERNATIONAL CAPS: 58

The most capped Catalan ever for Spain, Puyol is one of the most respected defenders in the world and was named 'Best European right-back' by UEFA in 2002. Barça's captain played at centre back for several years before reverting to full back this season. Very fond of offering referees 'helpful advice'. As a youth player, he was a goalkeeper!

7 EIDUR GUÐJOHNSEN



POSITION: Midfielder
NATIONALITY: Icelandic
DATE OF BIRTH: Jan 14, 1982
BARÇA DEBUT: 2006
FORMER CLUBS: Valur, PSV, KR Reykjavík, Bolton, Chelsea
INTERNATIONAL CAPS: 48

Arguably the finest Icelandic player ever, Guðjohnsen originally joined Barça in 2006 as a replacement for Henrik Larsson. Struggled to earn a place as a striker, but due to injuries, Rijkaard decided to try him out in midfield this season, where he is proving a massive hit with the fans that previously doubted him.

FC BARCELONA - THE SQUAD

8 ANDRÉS INIESTA



POSITION: Midfielder
NATIONALITY: Spanish
DATE OF BIRTH: May 11, 1984
BARÇA DEBUT: 2002
FORMER CLUBS: Barça B
INTERNATIONAL CAPS: 20
 From Albacete, the pale faced Iniesta is not actually Catalan but has been at Barça since he was 12. Originally a fringe player, he seized his opportunity when Xavi was injured in 2006 and is now considered one of the best attacking midfielders in the country. Plays a more attacking role for Spain, and scored his first goal in a friendly with England in 2007.

10 RONALDINHO



POSITION: Attacking midfielder
NATIONALITY: Brazilian
DATE OF BIRTH: Mar 21, 1980
BARÇA DEBUT: 2003
FORMER CLUBS: Gremio, PSG
INTERNATIONAL CAPS: 80
 Is any introduction required? Twice FIFA World Player of the Year and basically one of the classiest footballers ever to grace the planet. The sublimely skilled Ronaldinho is worth \$57.8m a year in marketing alone. Yet in recent months he has been criticised for a lull in form, with the local press blaming it on his extravagant lifestyle.

14 THIERRY HENRY



POSITION: Striker
NATIONALITY: French
DATE OF BIRTH: 17 Aug 1977
BARÇA DEBUT: 2007
FORMER CLUBS: Monaco, Juventus, Arsenal
INTERNATIONAL CAPS: 97
 Twice voted second best player in the world, the 1998 World Cup winner and ninth most marketable face in football struggled with injuries and failed to convince after joining Barça. But in recent weeks the fifth highest goalscorer in the Champions League has finally refound the form he showed at Arsenal.

9 SAMUEL ETO'o



POSITION: Striker
NATIONALITY: Cameroonian
DATE OF BIRTH: Mar 10, 1981
BARÇA DEBUT: 2004
FORMER CLUBS: Real Madrid, Real Mallorca
INTERNATIONAL CAPS: 60
 African player of the year on three occasions, and both Liga top scorer and UEFA Forward of the Year in 2006, Eto'o is also a vociferous campaigner against racism in football, and is never afraid of making controversial statements. Has scored more goals for Barça than any other member of the current squad.

11 GIANLUCA ZAMBROTTA



POSITION: Defender
NATIONALITY: Italian
DATE OF BIRTH: Feb 19, 1977
BARÇA DEBUT: 2006
FORMER CLUBS: Como, Bari, Juventus
INTERNATIONAL CAPS: 68
 It was a major coup for Barça when one of the best full backs in the world and recently crowned World Cup winner joined the club after Juventus were relegated following the *Calciopoli* scandal. But the 31 year old has failed to gain a regular place here, and is rumoured to be pondering a move, probably back to Italy.

15 EDMÍLSON



POSITION: Midfielder
NATIONALITY: Brazilian
DATE OF BIRTH: July 10, 1976
BARÇA DEBUT: 2004
FORMER CLUBS: Sao Paolo, Olympique Lyon
INTERNATIONAL CAPS: 42
 A player that seems to have spent more time injured than not since joining Barça, including most of this season. This devout Christian made the headlines recently with a damning condemnation of some of his team-mates' over the top lifestyles, and may well be moving on soon, with Newcastle reportedly showing an interest.

FC BARCELONA - THE SQUAD

16 SYLVINHO



POSITION: Defender
NATIONALITY: Brazilian
DATE OF BIRTH: April 12, 1974
BARÇA DEBUT: 2004
FORMER CLUBS: Corinthians, Arsenal, Celta Vigo
INTERNATIONAL CAPS: 6
 Ousted from Arsenal by Ashley Cole, but a success at Celta before joining Barça, this left back and naturalised Spaniard has generally failed to make the first team and is not likely to be offered an extension to his contract when it expires at the end of the season. All of his six caps for Brazil were in 2000 and 2001.

18 SANTIAGO EZQUERRO



POSITION: Striker
NATIONALITY: Spanish
DATE OF BIRTH: Dec 14, 1976
BARÇA DEBUT: 2005
FORMER CLUBS: Osasuna, Atlético Madrid, Mallorca, Bilbao
INTERNATIONAL CAPS: 1
 A crowd favourite at Bilbao, he has been bottom of the attacking pecking order since joining Barcelona in 2005 and rarely even makes the bench. Unlikely to be around much longer and press gossip has even linked him to a move to Celtic, although a move back to Bilbao or Osasuna are more likely options.

20 DECO



POSITION: Midfielder
NATIONALITY: Portuguese
DATE OF BIRTH: Aug 27, 1977
BARÇA DEBUT: 2004
FORMER CLUBS: Corinthians, Alverca, Salgueiros, FC Porto
INTERNATIONAL CAPS: 51
 Won the Champions League with both Barça and Porto (and also starred in the latter's 2003 UEFA Cup final win against Celtic). A dip in form and reported disagreements with Rijkaard have led to rumours of a move to the Premiership. Though he plays for Portugal, he was born and bred in Brazil.

17 GIOVANI DOS SANTOS



POSITION: Striker
NATIONALITY: Mexican
DATE OF BIRTH: May 11, 1989
BARÇA DEBUT: 2007
FORMER CLUBS: Barça B
INTERNATIONAL CAPS: 4
 18 year old prodigy with an uncanny resemblance to Ronaldinho, who has been on Barça's books since 2001. He was the star of Mexico's Under 17 World Cup triumph in 2005 and made his break into the first team this season and in September even got called up by Hugo Sanchez for the senior Mexican side. Potentially a huge star.

19 LIONEL MESSI



POSITION: Striker or winger
NATIONALITY: Argentinian
DATE OF BIRTH: June 24, 1987
BARÇA DEBUT: 2005
FORMER CLUBS: Barça B
INTERNATIONAL CAPS: 26
 The 'next Maradona' is probably more popular at Barça now than Ronaldinho, and was voted 2nd in the FIFA World Player of the Year awards for 2007 aged just 20. A bit selfish with the ball, but then he is one of the most skilful players this sport has ever seen, with some pundits even suggesting he has the potential to be as big as Maradona and Pele.

21 LILIAN THURAM



POSITION: Defender
NATIONALITY: French
DATE OF BIRTH: Jan 1, 1972
BARÇA DEBUT: 2006
FORMER CLUBS: Monaco, Parma, Juventus
INTERNATIONAL CAPS: 136
 The most capped French international ever, Thuram won the 1998 World Cup (scoring both of France's goals in the semi final) and also Euro 2000, and left Juve for Barça following the club's enforced relegation to Serie B. Now 36, and the oldest player in the Barça squad, there are not many seasons left in him now.

FC BARCELONA - THE SQUAD

22 ÉRIC ABIDAL



POSITION: Defender
NATIONALITY: French
DATE OF BIRTH: July 11, 1979
BARÇA DEBUT: 2007
FORMER CLUBS: AS Monaco, Lille, Olympique Lyon
INTERNATIONAL CAPS: 31
 One of stars of the multiple French title winning Lyon side, this fire-spirited defender came to Barça last summer in search of bigger things, despite his club's efforts to prevent the move. He's one of those players that rarely gets the attention he deserves, but is settling in well as Rijkaard's first choice left back.

24 TOURÉ YAYA



POSITION: Midfielder
NATIONALITY: Ivory Coast
DATE OF BIRTH: May 13, 1983
BARÇA DEBUT: 2007
FORMER CLUBS: ASEC Abidjan, Beveren, Metalurh Donetsk, Olympiakos, AS Monaco
INTERNATIONAL CAPS: 19
 The towering younger brother of Arsenal defender Kolo Touré is one of the success stories at Barça this season. Powerful and reliable, he is proving a much better signing than anybody had expected when he joined last summer. When he goes forward, he has an absolute thunderbolt of a shot in him.

4 BOJAN KRKIC



POSITION: Striker
NATIONALITY: Spanish
DATE OF BIRTH: Aug 28, 1990
BARÇA DEBUT: 2007
FORMER CLUBS: Barça B
INTERNATIONAL CAPS: 0
 His name comes from his Serbian dad, but he has lived in Spain all of his life. One of the most promising rising stars in world football, he broke all kinds of youth goalscoring records on his way to becoming the youngest player ever to appear in the Champions League at just 17 years and 22 days. He is also Barça's youngest ever goalscorer.

23 OLEGUER PRESAS



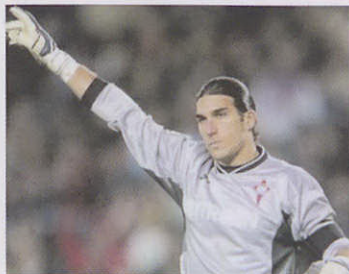
POSITION: Midfielder
NATIONALITY: Spanish, well...
DATE OF BIRTH: Feb 2, 1980
BARÇA DEBUT: 2002
FORMER CLUBS: Girona
INTERNATIONAL CAPS: Very 0
 Oleguer is establishing himself as a more than decent right or centre back, but it is for his political views that he is most renowned. His comments in favour of Catalan and Basque independence have led to him being regularly booed at several La Liga grounds. He is also strongly in favour of Catalans playing for their own national team, rather than Spain.

25 ALBERT JORQUERA



POSITION: Goalkeeper
NATIONALITY: Spanish
DATE OF BIRTH: March 3, 1979
BARÇA DEBUT: 2004
FORMER CLUBS: AD Ceuta, Mataró, Barça B
INTERNATIONAL CAPS: 0
 The second choice goalkeeper at Barça has always been preferred to Valdés in Copa del Rey matches. However, he was injured in December when playing for the unofficial Catalonia national team, leading to criticism in some quarters for the playing of such matches, and will be out until the end of the season.

13 JOSÉ MANUEL PINTO



POSITION: Goalkeeper
NATIONALITY: Spanish
DATE OF BIRTH: 8 Nov 1975
BARÇA DEBUT: 2008
FORMER CLUBS: Betis, Celta
INTERNATIONAL CAPS: 0
 With Jorquera injured, the inexperienced Oier Olazabal was not considered ready to face the responsibility of being Barça's second choice keeper. So, Pinto was brought in on loan from Galician outfit Celta, a player who won the Zamora trophy in 2005-06 for having the best goalkeeping record in the first division, letting in just 28 goals.

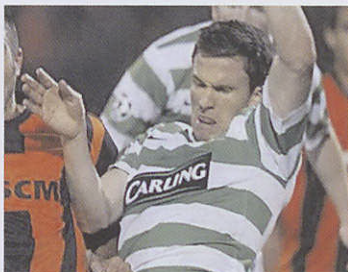
CELTIC FC - THE SQUAD

1 ARTUR BORUC



POSITION: Goalkeeper
NATIONALITY: Polish
DATE OF BIRTH: Feb 20, 1980
CELTIC DEBUT: 2005
FORMER CLUBS: Pogon Siedlce, Legia Warszawa, Dolcan Zabki
INTERNATIONAL CAPS: 30
 Seems to be edging out Kuszczak as Poland's first choice keeper, and star of Celtic's first ever European penalty shootout victory this season against Spartak Moscow. Has a habit of upsetting Rangers fans with his signs of the cross though! Originally signed on loan, but now has a permanent contract.

5 GARY CALDWELL



POSITION: Defender
NATIONALITY: Scottish
DATE OF BIRTH: Apr 12, 1982
CELTIC DEBUT: 2006
FORMER CLUBS: Newcastle, Darlington, Hibernian, Coventry, Derby County
INTERNATIONAL CAPS: 25
 Born in Stirling, Caldwell finally joined his boyhood favourites in the winter transfer window of 2006. He will always be loved in Scotland for scoring the goal that beat France at Hampden that year. Now an established first team regular, he can also play in midfield, and is an effective man-marker.

8 SCOTT BROWN



POSITION: Midfielder
NATIONALITY: Scottish
DATE OF BIRTH: Jun 25, 1985
CELTIC DEBUT: 2007
FORMER CLUBS: Hibernian
INTERNATIONAL CAPS: 8
 An absolute hero at Hibs, Brown has not disappointed in his first season in the hoops, who he joined for the highest transfer fee ever between two Scottish clubs. His Celtic form has also helped earn him a more regular place in the Scotland team. Brown was the victim of the much Youtubed horror tackle by Gilles Binya of Benfica earlier this season.

3 LEE NAYLOR



POSITION: Defender
NATIONALITY: English
DATE OF BIRTH: Mar 19, 1980
CELTIC DEBUT: 2006
FORMER CLUBS: Wolves
INTERNATIONAL CAPS: 0
 Played a full decade in the Wolves shirt, and excelled in their only Premiership season of 2003-04. Two seasons after, and regarded by many as one of the most underrated players in England, he moved north of the border. He has proven a surprise success at Celtic, becoming the regular left back. A good reader of the game and dangerous coming forward.

6 BOBO BALDÉ



POSITION: Defender
NATIONALITY: Guinean
DATE OF BIRTH: Oct 5, 1975
CELTIC DEBUT: 2001
FORMER CLUBS: Marseille, FC Mulhouse, Cannes, Toulouse
INTERNATIONAL CAPS: 26
 Back in action after a year sidelined through injury, French-born but Guinean international Baldé looks unlikely to win back his first team place and may not be wearing the hoops for very much longer. That's despite being a favourite at Celtic since 2001, where he has turned the collection of yellow and red cards into an art form.

9 GEORGIOS SAMARAS



POSITION: Forward
NATIONALITY: Greek
DATE OF BIRTH: Feb 21, 1985
CELTIC DEBUT: 2008
FORMER CLUBS: Heerenveen, Manchester City
INTERNATIONAL CAPS: 12
 Promising striker on loan from Man City, who signed him for a record fee for a Greek player, but where he struggled to get in the side.

NOTE: German defender **Andreas Hinkel** (No 2) is not not eligible for Celtic's European matches, as he has already appeared in the Champions League this season for Sevilla.

CELTIC FC - THE SQUAD

10 JAN VENNEGOOR OF HESSELINK



POSITION: Striker
NATIONALITY: Dutch
DATE OF BIRTH: Nov 7, 1978
CELTIC DEBUT: 2006
FORMER CLUBS: FC Twente, PSV Eindhoven

INTERNATIONAL CAPS: 12
 Injuries have prevented one of the biggest names in world football having the kind of impact on Celtic, who he joined in 2006, as he did at PSV. Due to their past Dutch connection, JVH recently admitted that as a youngster he actually took more interest in following Barga than any Dutch clubs, so this is a big day for him.

11 PAUL HARTLEY



POSITION: Midfielder
NATIONALITY: Scottish
DATE OF BIRTH: Oct 19, 1976
CELTIC DEBUT: 2007
FORMER CLUBS: Hamilton Acc, Millwall, Raith, Hibernian, Greenock Morton, St. Johnstone, Hearts

INTERNATIONAL CAPS: 17
 Hearts and Ivanauskas could no longer resist the temptation to cash in on their prized asset just over a year ago, with both Celtic and Rangers having expressed a long interest in signing the Hamilton born player. Hartley is a now a regular starter for his boyhood heroes.

12 MARK WILSON



POSITION: Defender
NATIONALITY: Scottish
DATE OF BIRTH: June 5, 1984
CELTIC DEBUT: 2006
FORMER CLUBS: Dundee United

INTERNATIONAL CAPS: 0
 A lifelong Celtic supporter and one of the most promising young players in Scotland, Wilson's dream might have come true when he signed for Celtic, but his time at the club has been blighted by injury. He is currently out with a knee problem, one of the main reasons why Andreas Hinkel was drafted in.

15 EVANDER SNO



POSITION: Midfielder
NATIONALITY: Dutch
DATE OF BIRTH: April 9, 1987
CELTIC DEBUT: 2006
FORMER CLUBS: Feyenoord, NAC Breda

INTERNATIONAL CAPS: 0
 He may be an amazingly versatile player, but Sno spends most of his time on the bench. So, although he has had his moments, such as a terrific performance against AC Milan in last year's Champions League, he is never likely to form a major part of Gordon Strachan's plans. Osasuna have been asking questions.

17 STEVEN PRESSLEY



POSITION: Defender
NATIONALITY: Scottish
DATE OF BIRTH: Oct 11, 1973
CELTIC DEBUT: 2006
FORMER CLUBS: Rangers, Coventry, Dundee Utd, Hearts

INTERNATIONAL CAPS: 32
 'Elvis' is something of a rarity in Scottish football in that he has played for both Rangers and Celtic, although there was a 12 year gap in between. In winning the Scottish Cup with Celtic last year, he became the first player to do so with three different clubs, although he has struggled to secure a place in the first eleven.

18 MASSIMO DONATI



POSITION: Midfielder
NATIONALITY: Italian
DATE OF BIRTH: Mar 26, 1981
CELTIC DEBUT: 2007
FORMER CLUBS: Atalanta, AC Milan, Parma, Torino, Sampdoria, Messina

INTERNATIONAL CAPS: 32
 A €15 million buy for Milan in 2001 who played just 17 games for the *Rossoneri* (at just under a million a game!). After almost running out of Serie A teams to go on loan to, he came to Celtic last summer, and it was largely thanks to his winner against Shakhtar Donetsk that Celtic are here today.

CELTIC FC - THE SQUAD

19 BARRY ROBSON



POSITION: Midfielder
NATIONALITY: Scottish
DATE OF BIRTH: Nov 7, 1978
CELTIC DEBUT: 2008
FORMER CLUBS: Rangers, Inverness CT, Forfar, Dundee Utd
INTERNATIONAL CAPS: 1

Being the second highest scorer in the SPL behind Scott McDonald was no mean feat for a Dundee United midfielder, and he was snapped up the Celtic during the transfer window for £1m. The 29 year old claimed "I feel as though my best years are ahead of me", and he may well be right - this guy just gets better and better.

21 MARK BROWN



POSITION: Goalkeeper
NATIONALITY: Scottish
DATE OF BIRTH: Feb 28, 1981
CELTIC DEBUT: 2007
FORMER CLUBS: Rangers, Motherwell, Inverness
INTERNATIONAL CAPS: 0

One of the very few former Rangers players to have joined Celtic, Brown is the second choice keeper. With Artur Boruc injured earlier this season, he proved a more than capable deputy, playing nine games including a brilliant display away to Spartak Moscow to help Celtic through to the group stages of the Champions League.

25 SHUNSUKE NAKAMURA



POSITION: Midfielder
NATIONALITY: Japanese
DATE OF BIRTH: Jun 24, 1978
CELTIC DEBUT: 2005
FORMER CLUBS: Yokohama Marinos, Reggina
INTERNATIONAL CAPS: 73

Possibly the finest Asian export ever, Nakamura collected all the major player of the year awards in Scotland last season, having scored a wealth of spectacular and often decisive goals, including the Goal of the Season against Dundee United. He has missed most of this campaign with a knee injury, but made a welcome return in January.

52 PAUL CADDIS



POSITION: Defender
NATIONALITY: Scottish
DATE OF BIRTH: Apr 19, 1988
CELTIC DEBUT: 2008
FORMER CLUBS: None
INTERNATIONAL CAPS: 0

This youngster from Irvine made his first appearance for Celtic at the end of last month when coming on as a sub against Falkirk. A week later he was in the starting line up to face Kilmarnock. By the end February it he had already started his first ever Champions League match, where he faced the task of marking of Ronaldinho. It's been quite a year for the boy!

24 JEAN-JOËL PERRIER-DOUMBÉ



POSITION: Defender
NATIONALITY: Cameroonian
DATE OF BIRTH: Sep 27, 1978
CELTIC DEBUT: 2007
FORMER CLUBS: Auxerre, Stade Rennais
INTERNATIONAL CAPS: 15

Came to Celtic on loan in January 2007, but enjoyed very few run-outs until the end of the season, when he even scored the winner in the Scottish Cup final. Signed a full contract for the 2007-08 season but was injured in the Champions League match with AC Milan and likely to be sidelined for some time yet.

27 SCOTT McDONALD



POSITION: Striker
NATIONALITY: Australian
DATE OF BIRTH: Aug 21, 1983
CELTIC DEBUT: 2007
FORMER CLUBS: Morwell Falcons, Southampton, Huddersfield, Bournemouth, Milton Keynes Dons, Motherwell
INTERNATIONAL CAPS: 5

It was Skippy who scored two late goals for Motherwell on the last day of the 2004-05 season to deny Celtic the title, and two years later he is now the first choice striker at Celtic Park, where he is currently the league's top scorer by a considerable margin.

CELTIC FC - THE SQUAD

29 KOKI MIZUNO



POSITION: Midfielder
NATIONALITY: Japanese
DATE OF BIRTH: Sep 6, 1985
CELTIC DEBUT: 2008
FORMER CLUBS: JEF United
 Ichihara Chiba
INTERNATIONAL CAPS: 4
 This rising young star of the Japanese League arrived in Glasgow just over a month ago by recommendation of international team mate Shunsuke Nakamura. With practically no experience of football outside of Japan, he's an interesting signing in the hope that the Nakamura lightning can strike twice in the same place.

41 JOHN KENNEDY



POSITION: Defender
NATIONALITY: Scottish
DATE OF BIRTH: Aug 18, 1983
CELTIC DEBUT: 1999
FORMER CLUBS: None
INTERNATIONAL CAPS: 1
 Celtic's longest serving player, though he has only started 28 games in all that time. He injured knee ligaments on his international debut against Romania in 2004 and was out for three years. Returned last year, and was gradually finding his way back into the side, but was then injured again in November against Shakhtar Donetsk.

46 AIDEN MCGEADY



POSITION: Midfielder
NATIONALITY: Irish
DATE OF BIRTH: April 4, 1986
CELTIC DEBUT: 2004
FORMER CLUBS: None
INTERNATIONAL CAPS: 16
 Glasgow born, Auden qualifies for Ireland via his parentage, and is a Celtic boy through and through. As a teenager he was hailed as one of the brightest young prospects in the British Isles and has developed into a personal favourite of manager Gordon Strachan, generally employed in an attacking role down the left wing.

33 CHRIS KILLEN



POSITION: Striker
NATIONALITY: New Zealander
DATE OF BIRTH: Oct 8, 1981
CELTIC DEBUT: 2007
FORMER CLUBS: Man City, Wrexham, Port Vale, Oldham, Hibernian
INTERNATIONAL CAPS: 26
 One of the few Kiwi soccer stars, after four reasonable seasons at Oldham, Killen was sent on a free transfer to Hibs, where he really started flourishing. Joined Celtic on another free at the start of this season, where his usual role has been to come off the subs bench in the last half hour or so.

44 STEPHEN McMANUS



POSITION: Defender
NATIONALITY: Scottish
DATE OF BIRTH: Sep 10, 1982
CELTIC DEBUT: 2003
FORMER CLUBS: None
INTERNATIONAL CAPS: 11
 One of the great success stories of the Celtic youth academy, and now a regular choice at centre back, McManus was made captain last summer after Neil Lennon departed for Forest. The typical tough tackling Scottish defender, he is also a danger in front of goal when moving up for set pieces, and has won a regular place in the Scotland squad.

48 DARREN O'DEA



POSITION: Defender
NATIONALITY: Irish
DATE OF BIRTH: Feb 4, 1987
CELTIC DEBUT: 2006
FORMER CLUBS: None
INTERNATIONAL CAPS: 0
 Born in Dublin, O'Dea is the captain of the Republic of Ireland U21 team. A product of Celtic's youth academy, he is still only getting the occasional game for the side, but when he has played, he has almost always looked impressive, and certainly has a bright future ahead of him. Has been named in senior Irish national squads, but has yet to be brought on.

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